Football World Cup qualifier: Italy 0 England 0

England secure passage to France

David Lacey in Rome

ENGLAND will go to the World Cup in France next summer looking harder to beat than at any time since Sir Alf Ramsey's side set out for Mexico in 1970. That is the measure of Glenn Hoddle's achievement after the scoreless draw with Italy in the Stadio Olimpico last Saturday which ensured England would reach the 1998 tournament by winning their group and avoiding the play-offs.

Twenty-seven years ago, as holders, England's prestige was considerable and they were confidently expected to win the World Cup again. Now, in a more complicated world, public optimism will be more guarded, but reaching the semi-finals of last year's European Championship re-awoke feelings which had lain dormant since Bobby Robson's team reached the last four of Italia 90, and it would not take much for the bandwagon to start rolling once more.

Already the next World Cup is looking as open as any of its predecessors. When a German team have to scramble a late winner to top their group after sharing six goals with Albania at home, and Italy can be left to contemplate a play-off against Russia for a place in the finals, then anything is possible.

At the moment Brazil are the only outstanding nation among the finalists but England are among the most consistent, and to qualify without conceding a goal in away matches will have marked them out as opponents to avoid in the opening phase when the draw is made in Marseille on December 4.

"Now the hard work starts," Hoddle said after Saturday's game, trying to keep a sense of perspective amid all the English euphoria; and it may start on November 19 with a warm-up game at Wembley against Portugal. But as national coach he has fulfilled his prime function — to get the team to the World Cup.

The last person to do that was Bobby Robson eight years ago, when a scoreless game against Poland in Chorzow completed England's qualification for the 1990 tournament. In the last minute of the match Ryszard Tarasiewicz produced a 30-yard shot which rebounded off the crossbar. A goal then and, had results elsewhere gone the wrong way, England would not have made it.

Stoppage time in Saturday's match sent a similar shudder down English spines. No sooner had Ian Wright, with an open net to aim at but from the acutest of angles, hit the outside of the near post than Italy broke away in one final counter-attack. Alessandro Del Piero's centre from the left was perfectly delivered — right height, weight and angle — for Christian Vieri in the middle. Roberto Bettega would have buried the chance, and England with it. Vieri headed wide.

This was the only time in the game England could be said to have been lucky; apart, that is, from their overall good fortune in having a thoroughly impartial referee.

Italy were reduced to 10 men for the last quarter of an hour when Angelo Di Livio was sent off for a late two-footed lunge at Sol Campbell. Already deprived of Paolo Maldini, injured making a tackle on Paul Ince after 31 minutes, Italy's fast-fading hopes of victory virtually disappeared at that moment, apart from Vieri's late chance. In essence they had worn themselves out in fruitless assaults on the English squares.

Certainly the performance of Hoddle's players was Wellingtonian in concept and character. Led by Captain Ince, head bandaged to protect a gash sustained in a collision with Demetrio Albertini, and Sergeant-Major Tony Adams, with Lance-Bombardier David Batty producing another performance worthy of a mention in dispatches, England coolly and efficiently blocked Italy's avenues of approach, sabotaged their lines of communication and silenced their guns.

● England's triumph was marred by violence on the terraces in which scores of people were injured. Supporters arriving back in Britain claimed police with batons used heavy-handed tactics. David Mellor, the head of the Government's football task force, accused the Italian police of a "gross over-response".

Four Britons were given suspended sentences on charges of attacking police when they appeared in court in Rome on Monday. A total of 26 others are still to appear before magistrates on charges including violence, resisting arrest and affray.



Ince-pirational: Captain Courageous celebrates with Beckham and Gascoigne PHOTOGRAPH ROSS KINNAIRD

Cryptic crossword by Janus

Across

1 Unambiguous guide (6)
4 Are they the last line of defence in the kitchen? (8)
9 Doctor opposing one order to change location (4,2)
10 Clears of misconduct in the open air (8)
11 Angry allusion to literary aid (5-9)
13 They are dangerous to children and kippers perhaps (10)
14 Old Persian ally's sound reward (4)
16 Rich dress with right decoration (4)
18 Transposition of words in essay on team selection (10)
21 Georgian period in 20th century USA? (4,10)
23 Name getting a mention occasionally (8)
24 Singer with nothing to drink (6)
25 Call to team where seconds are important (8)
26 Tribe featured in "Points of View" (6)

Down

1 Allocated a mean part to titled lady (4)
2 Venerated always in colour (7)
3 Part of goal of irate lawyers (8)
5 Composer's overflow vehicle (4-7)
6 Terribly sore about car's faults (6)
7 Distinctive nature of German town church (7)
8 Type of fruit weight watchers should enjoy (9)
12 Acted on behalf of traveller taken ill (11)
13 Break strain with climber's aid after losing way (9)
15 Rate revision, at that time without menace (8)
17 Supporters of 21 from South Africa? (7)
19 Barbiturate on short-time loan? (7)
20 Ship carrying long spikes (6)
22 Animals said to sleep lightly (4)

Last week's solution

Scotland 2 Latvia 0

Brown proves world-class

Patrick Glenn

SCOTLAND fans should commission a statue in honour of Craig Brown. Even a cursory glance at the list of countries who will contest the World Cup qualifying play-offs should be sufficient reason for them to start the collection. The astuteness with which the national coach has devised, stabilised and manipulated a team palpably short of devastating virtuosity deserves nothing less.

The victory over Latvia in Group Four takes the Scots straight through to France as best runners-up without the ordeal of a play-off. It also spares them the shudders of apprehension they would have suffered before Monday's draw for the other eight runners-up contesting Europe's last four places in the finals.

And it was confirmation of Brown's extraordinary ability to overcome weaknesses in his squad and exploit those of opponents by meticulous attention to detail and his understanding of the modern game.

At the end of an emotional day he hurried to share the credit with his coaches, Alex Miller and Alan Hodgkinson, and the medical back-up team. This characteristic diffidence was a futile attempt at deflecting the fact that, in the international arena, Brown is a world-class act.

He has managed to qualify the Scots for both the major championships they have contested in his charge, successfully negotiating the obstacles in the way of a small country with limited resources.

Brown said after Euro 96 that his team, who had performed creditably against Holland, Switzerland and England, would have to be overhauled for the World Cup campaign. His subtle tinkering has been so effective that six players hardly on the periphery a year ago are likely to be key elements in France.

Kevin Gallacher got Scotland's first just before half-time and with 10 minutes remaining Gordon Durie added his name to the score-sheet.

If there were tremors of anguish among the 47,613 crowd at Celtic Park for long periods of a fraught 90 minutes, they were not shared by Brown. His confidence in his players' ability is absolute.

Nobody will be surprised to learn that Brown left Glasgow last Sunday on a reconnaissance trip to France, seeking out accommodation and training facilities at the various centres a full two months in advance of the full draw. This is one bird who is never likely to be short of tasty worms.

● Wales lost 2-3 to Belgium in Group Seven, and Northern Ireland went down 0-1 to Portugal. Both teams were eliminated. The Republic of Ireland's 1-1 draw against Romania gave them the chance of a place in the finals if they can beat Belgium in a two-leg play-off.

The Guardian Weekly

Vol 157, No 17
Week ending October 26, 1997

The Washington Post Le Monde



Relatives of some of the 300 victims massacred at Bentalha mourn at a cemetery near Algiers PHOTO AP

'This is where they shot my wife. Here they killed my daughter with an axe'

David Hirst in Bentalha hears horrific accounts of Algeria's worst massacre

AITAR AHMED leaned against the wall of his burnt-out kitchen and sobbed. "This is where they shot my wife, Fatima," he said, pointing to the sink. "Here they killed my daughter Nabila — with an axe — and here my son Khaled, with knives."

The kitchen was on the second floor of Ahmed's three-storey home in Bentalha, a dormitory town on the outskirts of Algiers. Here, on the night of September 22, terrorists — presumed to belong to the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) — killed about 300 people in a massacre that captured world attention because it took place so close to the capital.

It also fuelled growing demands for some kind of international intervention in Algeria's barbarous civil war; or at least for an international inquiry into the massacres, which seem to grow in scale, frequency and horror. The rest of the world is beginning to ask the same sinister question that Algerians have been asking themselves for years: *who* is behind these atrocities?

Is it simply, according to the regime, religious fanatics, bandits or psychopaths? Or do they enjoy the complicity of others — perhaps of some diehard faction of the regime itself — which opposes any dialogue or compromise with the Islamist opposition, be it moderate or extreme?

Bentalha is typical of those new, semi-rural, semi-urban neighbourhoods — scruffy, formless, half-finished — that proliferate on the ever expanding perimeters of Third World cities. Much of it is manifestly poor. The town lies a mere 13km from Algiers. There is a barracks less than 2km away.

As Ahmed tells it, the terrorists knew that they would be unimpeded in their grisly handiwork. They went about it in leisurely fashion.

The assailants — anything between 50 to 100 of them, according to Ahmed — came at about 11pm; they did not leave until shortly before dawn, six hours later. According to Ahmed, the army sent tanks to the very edge of the town while a helicopter circled overhead. No one else contests the essence of his version but some, more circumspect, found justifications for the army's non-intervention.

Some of his neighbours took refuge in his house. That is why 24 people died on the first floor, and 17, along with his wife, son and daughter, on the second. About 120 more managed to escape to the roof. Ahmed said that it was from the roof that he saw the tanks. In fact the traces of tank tracks are still clearly visible — they end just 200 metres from his house. It was from the roof that he also saw the helicopter.

It is not just the army and the gendarmerie that Ahmed cursed, but his neighbours too. A few had arms — members of the self-defence units, the so called "patriots".

But the great unanswered question is how the terrorists could have entered so well-protected a town in the first place and then, even more astonishingly, escape across the open plain with the same apparent ease with which they had come.

Comment, page 14

Britain will say no to euro – for now

Guardian Reporters

THE UK Chancellor, Gordon Brown, is to put his political credibility on the line next week with a detailed Commons defence of the Government's decision to remain outside European monetary union for the whole of the current Parliament.

After facing down the might of the London financial markets on Monday, Mr Brown will seek to repair the damage to his reputation caused by the handling of the single currency issue through a long-awaited statement to MPs.

Treasury officials shrugged off calls for an early recall of Parliament, saying such a move would have smacked of panic. However, they admitted they were relieved that last weekend's confusion over the Government's intentions had not triggered the meltdown in the markets that some pundits had predicted.

The 10th anniversary of Black Monday looked set to be a rerun of October 1987 as the FTSE 100 Index plunged by 120 points in early trading. However, it later recovered and closed only 60 points lower on the day.

An unrepentant Mr Brown, in the City for the opening of the Stock Exchange's new trading system, said: "I have said before, and consistently, that it is unlikely that Britain will join the first wave [in 1999]. We have to ask questions about our level of preparation, the flexibility of the economy and about the economic cycle itself which has been out of line with our European partners."

Treasury preparations for the most crucial test of the Government since it came to office in May involve a dossier in which officials conclude that Britain will meet none of the five tests set by Mr Brown for entry into monetary union by 1999 and that a period of stability will be needed for several years after that before Britain could possibly join, and abandon the pound for the euro.

Mr Brown will tell MPs that the current strength of sterling makes early entry into monetary union impossible, and that the turmoil that may surround the birth of the euro is the precise opposite of the stability sought by the Government.

Tony Blair joined his Chancellor in trying to calm nerves in the City. He told the visiting German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, that Britain was unlikely to join monetary union in the first wave but would not attempt to undermine efforts of other countries to get the single currency off the ground on January 1, 1999.

Opposition parties were quick to seize on the confusion sown by Mr Brown's interview in the London Times last weekend, which was seen as appearing to rule out early single currency membership. The shadow chancellor, Peter Lilley, said Mr Brown had failed to make the situation clearer in his comments. "The basic problem is that he [Mr Brown] has not followed his own advice and kept quiet until he had something to say to Parliament, where he can be held accountable and subject to scrutiny."

Kenneth Clarke, the former chancellor, condemned what he called Mr Brown's "unimpressive display". He told Channel 4 News: "Gordon Brown has merely repeated the policy he's had for a long time. It's the same policy I had."

Mr Brown said if the country did not join the system in 1999, it "will need a period of stability without continuing speculation while Britain endeavours to meet the economic tests I have laid down".

● The European Commission last week published its rosiest economic forecast yet for the single currency, suggesting that 14 of the 15 EU members, including Britain, are likely to qualify for monetary union if they choose to do so.

US greenhouse gas emissions keep rising

Martin Kettle in Washington and Ian Traynor in Bonn

SUBSTANTIAL increases in United States greenhouse gas emissions have all but put paid to any possibility that the world's biggest contributor to global warming will be able to sign a new international treaty limiting pollutants later this year.

Emissions of greenhouse gases from cars, factories and power plants in the US rose 3.4 per cent in the past year, according to an announcement by the US department of energy on Monday. The increases seriously undermine the credibility of President Clinton's 1993 commitment to reduce US emissions to 1990 levels by 2000.

The soaring rises came as officials from more than 150 countries and environmental lobbyists met in Bonn to prepare a draft treaty on global warming to be signed at a conference in Kyoto, Japan, in December.

But the US ambassador to Germany, John Kornblum, dashed lingering hopes of a sudden policy shift. "We are not looking for a quick solution," he said.

The new report shows that US emissions accelerated further in 1996. The energy department admitted that the 3.4 per cent rise from 1995 levels was "the highest rate of increase in years".

In spite of Mr Clinton's promise to reverse the trend, the total increase is now more than 8 per cent since 1990, and is on course to reach 13 per cent by the end of the decade. US emissions have increased each year this decade in each of the three main categories: carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide.

US pollution levels grew even faster than the country's energy consumption, which rose 3.2 per cent in 1996, and than economic output, which rose 2.4 per cent. The energy department attributes the rises both to increased economic activity and to higher prices for natural gas, which boosted demand for dirtier forms of energy, such as coal.

But the stark conclusion from the new figures is that the US has done little to curb its enormous appetite for energy.

Analysis, page 15

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6 60
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3 80

Aid groups struggle to stay neutral under fire

WHILE welcoming a serious attempt to debate the dilemmas that aid agencies face when responding to emergencies, we were disappointed by the incorrect and damaging reference John Pomfret makes to Save the Children in order to illustrate his point (Charities get caught up as tools of war, October 5). Save the Children chose not to work in the Goma refugee camps from 1994-96. We recognised that the complexity of the environment would have eventually led to unacceptable compromises, one of which might have been having to share a relief plane packed with arms without having control of the situation. But this never happened. With so many agencies already involved in Goma, Save the Children took the view that it could provide no valuable assistance to the relief effort.

Many of the established non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have long been aware of the need to be clear about roles and relationships as a prerequisite to engaging in complex emergencies. Lessons learned from operations in Somalia, Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, among others, have challenged the NGOs and led them to consider carefully the consequences and possible interpretations of their actions. For a considerable time we have been operating in a context in which we have had to determine the most appropriate action in situations where political, legal, diplomatic and even moral clarity was lacking. Agencies which seek a more accountable and professional role for humanitarianism need to have a political understanding of emergency situations, for only by fully understanding the situation can we ensure that we retain a non-partisan approach.

Mr Pomfret is right to focus on the issue of neutrality. The central dilemma is whether it is possible to supply humanitarian assistance under authorities — whether governments or rebel armies — which are ignoring basic human rights without providing support to that authority, thereby doing a disservice to the people one is trying to assist.

Since the end of the cold war the range of complex emergencies and the scope for providing relief has expanded, but the political will, leadership and acumen to solve them has not. In almost all circumstances funding for emergencies is not dependent on analysis but is geared to provide food, water and medicine against all the odds and at any cost.

Both NGOs and Western powers have made matters worse through their indecisiveness in dealing with the post-genocide problems of Rwanda. More alarmingly, a number of NGOs, through naivety and a degree of arrogance, have overplayed their own importance in terms of what they could contribute. They have become partisan and have tainted all NGOs in the process.

Now is the time for a concerted action to articulate a new humanitarian agenda. Complex emergencies still continue, yet we are almost paralysed in our engagement.

Save the Children would never claim to have the political solution to these emergencies. The art is to understand and accept the parameters of our work. Those who lack the analysis but claim to have the solutions are dangerous. We must take responsibility for our actions; but we cannot take responsibility for the inaction of others.

Angela Penrose,
Save the Children, London

Consuming passion

AS SOMEONE who considers himself hardened to the crass exploitation carried out under the misnomers of free trade and growth, and one frustratingly resigned to the domination of this as the ethic upon which most of the world turns, John Vidal's report on the U'wa of Colombia left me feeling trapped and depressed (A tribe's suicide pact, October 12). His piece made me recognise the acts that I carry out everyday that are the cause of further exploitation.

Where I live, public transport was long ago determined uneconomical and so the network of small towns that one must visit in order to buy food, borrow books and carry out general chores is accessible only by road. Consequently, a car is the only form of transport. Even though I have consciously avoided for the last 10 years Shell, BP and Total, and always shop for the necessary products of life with the actions of their producers in mind, I know I am still trapped into this causal cycle.

Multi-corporations justify their actions within this tight, self-determined rationale in which all peoples must be reduced from self-providers to consumers in order to continue capitalism's growth. Vidal's article jerked me out of the complacency I lapse into to preserve my sanity and reminded me that we in the West, schooled in consumption from birth, must — as an everyday act of resistence — refuse to consume from those who demand that we do.

Adam Bartlett,
Bangalow, NSW, Australia

Soul-searching over Vichy

PAUL WEBSTER'S optimistic view is that Maurice Papon's trial will force France to finally confront its collaborationist past and accept responsibility for its zeal in sending thousands of Jews to German death camps (French trial will examine shame of Vichy, October 12).

With President Chirac and more recently Roman Catholic bishops apologising for the role of the state and the Church, France is indeed making amends. But the French? We as a people have yet to admit collective responsibility for letting it all happen, for turning a blind eye to the many transit camps, the round-ups, the discriminatory measures.

Of course, many French people resisted oppression bravely and sacrificed their own lives. But this should not obliterate the fact that the overwhelming majority of the French collaborated, albeit passively.

The Papon trial is long overdue. It is only right that those in power at the time should be brought to book: we owe it to the victims and their relatives. The risk is that it may once again shift responsibility for past horrors solely on to top civil servants and other government officials.

Alain Rossignol,
Le Havre, France.

FINDING fault with others makes most people feel good. So I was not surprised to read in Paul Webster's article that in Maurice Papon's trial France will have to face its "appalling anti-Semitic past".

Which France is Webster talking? Not that from which, according to the same Serge Klarsfeld who brought about Papon's trial, less than a quarter of its Jewish population had been deported and which resisted the Nazi laws better than a number of other western European nations (French bishops to admit collusion with Nazis, September 28). And who does Webster think hid and fed, or gave false identities and false baptism certificates to, the Jews who remained in France through the war?

Judgment should not be passed on the French without mention of the ordinary men and women, as well as the priests and pastors, who helped the Jews survive the Occupation. But then it is easier to comment on a situation when one has not lived through it.

Amy Gibson,
London

BELGIUM has always settled back into the status quo: it is characteristic of its moral ambiguity, symptomatic of a country that has been unable to come to terms with its second world war past (Belgium settles back into status quo, October 5). The demoralisation of the corps of magistrates goes back to the post-war period and the increasing watering down of the prosecutions of Nazi collaborators on both sides of the linguistic divide.

The treatment of Belgian Jewry remains a blot on the country's past — the trial of Belgium's Papons won't take place. Nor will the sinister activities of the Flemish and Walloon SS legions in the USSR ever be fully exposed. Leon Degrelle, Belgium's arch collaborationist, was allowed to live in Spain in quiet and luxury, fomenting revanchist intrigues for more than 50 years.

Christian F Verbeke,
Gouvy, Belgium

A climate of change

WHILE it may be appealing to dramatise the horrors caused by this year's abnormally strong El Niño warming in the tropical Pacific ocean (Ill wind that blows nobody any good, October 5), it may be of interest to note that despite the late arrival of this year's monsoon, India actually received slightly above normal amounts of monsoon rainfall this summer (plus 4 per cent on average).

This is, in general, good for the 900 million people living in India and is contrary to what one might expect from the eastward planetary-scale shift of rainfall usually associated with a strong El Niño event such as that of 1997.

The failure of the Asian monsoon to respond to El Niño and La Niña events in the Pacific ocean was also prevalent during the period 1901-40. The last time the monsoon rainfall was significantly deficient was 10 years ago, in 1987, and evidence is beginning to suggest that the Asian monsoon may therefore have re-entered another quiet epoch.

The understanding of such climate variations is a major scientific challenge. Readers interested in more scientific details are recommended to consult the monsoon web site at:
http://www.meteo.fr/perso/david.stephenson/monsoon.html

(Dr) David B Stephenson,
(Dr) Rupa Kumar Kolli,
Research Climatologists,
Toulouse, France

Briefly

THE Indonesian political system is as transparently fair as Sa[illegible] legal procedure (October 12). [illegible] six unnamed companies are accused of starting the fires that have poisoned much of Southeast Asia. Though none have rebutted the accusations, the government has decided, on unknown grounds, to suspend the permits of 29, also unnamed, for how long no one knows. In this despicably opaque system about all that one can safely assume is that none of the financial cronies of the Suharto family will suffer.

Geoff Mullen,
McMahons Point, NSW, Australia

MARTIN WALKER appears to believe that the establishment of the euro as a world reserve currency alongside the US dollar would, in some unspecified way, benefit Europeans (October 5). Is my memory playing me false or was it not the *folie de grandeur* of post-war British politicians, up to and including Harold Wilson, in trying to maintain such a role for sterling that did for British industry and put the skids under the welfare state?

John Roberts,
Labastide-Paumes, France

HUGO YOUNG tells us that "Parliament, not the people, is sovereign: an arrangement that constrains the power of demagogues and protects minorities against coarse majority self-interest" (October 12). If that is so, perhaps he could explain why, over the past 18 years, it singularly failed to protect the interests of the majority against coarse minority self-interest until the people intervened on May 1 this year.

Barrie Hill,
Beccleuf, France

IN VIEW of the Tories' decision to be kind to single mothers, gays, the poor and the unemployed (October 19), one can only ask, is the road to Damascus now in Blackpool?

Joyce Whitehead,
Salford, Manchester

REFERRING to Nigel Tappin's letter (September 28), I would like to correct his misrepresentation of the term "100 Days" as being American in origin. Even the Random House Dictionary of the English (sic) Language acknowledges the fact that the term relates to the period between Napoleon's return to Paris and the battle of Waterloo (1815). Of course, Mr Tappin is a resident of Ontario and may not know about *Les Cent-Jours*. We here in Europe do (though we are also familiar with the American derivative).

Michael Yaxley,
Gothenburg, Sweden

The **Guardian Weekly**

October 26, 1997 Vol 157 No 17

Annual subscription rates are £49 United Kingdom; £55 Europe inc. Eire, USA and Canada; £63 Rest of World.
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Cobra militia loots Congolese capital

William Wallis in Brazzaville

VICTORIOUS rebels in Congo-Brazzaville's civil war celebrated their takeover of the republic last week with a bout of frenzied looting in the capital. The Cobra militia men, loyal to the former military ruler Denis Sassou-Nguesso, pushed wheelbarrows loaded with stolen bric-à-brac along streets strewn with corpses and the rubble from collapsed buildings. In bars they danced around kegs of palm wine and chanted along with a handful of women.

Many of the fighters were dressed in macabre drag: golden wigs, wedding veils, plastic horror masks imported from Europe, and for one a skimpy woman's swimming costume beneath a not so skimpy ammunition belt. "It's a war disguise. They wear it as a fetish to protect them in battle," says Serge, a Cobra commander whose superior rank allows him a regular military uniform.

While his private army finished off the destruction of areas of the capital spared from previous fighting, Gen Sassou addressed his first news conference since taking power. He said Congo's problems, which led to the bloody civil war between his Cobra militia and forces loyal to elected President Pascal Lissouba, were rooted in "tribalism, regionalism, intolerance and political violence".

"In order that history does not repeat itself, we ought to attack the problem at the root and henceforth work for national reconciliation and unity to finally give birth to an indivisible and happy democratic Congo," he said.

This could take a long time, and holding democratic elections is unlikely to be an early priority. Perhaps a more pressing concern will be to dismantle the many different ethnic and political militias spawned by years of bitter power struggle among Congo's élite.

Young Cobra fighters say they took up arms after the humiliation of unemployment and the disappointment at what they consider Mr Lissouba's broken promise. "We were so fed up. I have an economics degree but there was no work for me," says Willie, a 25-year-old Cobra. "Now I've killed many times and I have to try to forget the war."

The fighting in Brazzaville erupted when Mr Lissouba sent troops to surround the residence of Gen Sassou — a former Marxist who ruled the country for 14 years until losing elections in 1992 — in an attempt to disarm his private militia before presidential elections. The elections were derailed by the conflicts, and months of internationally sponsored peace talks proved fruitless.

The military stalemate could not have been broken last week without the intervention of neighbouring Angola's army backed with tanks and MiG fighter jets.

Angolan troops sent by President Eduardo dos Santos helped the Cobras to capture Pointe Noire, Congo's second city and centre of its lucrative oil industry. In doing so, they dealt a decisive blow to Mr Lissouba's grip on power.



A wig-wearing Cobra rebel celebrates victory PHOTO: DAVID GUTTENFELDER

Mr Dos Santos is now well placed to demand co-operation from Gen Sassou in suppressing the bases of his own Unita opponents at home and of the separatist rebels from the oil-rich Angolan enclave of Cabinda.

Congo was one of the last fuel and weapon bases in the region for Unita rebels after they lost their backing from the former Zaire when the late dictator, Sese Seko Mobutu, was overthrown this year, also with Angola's help.

The intervention of Angola in its neighbours' wars was not perhaps what the international community had in mind when recommending African solutions to African problems.

In the meantime Brazzaville's former 800,000 residents are dispersed in the bush and forests of Congo and in refugee camps in Kinshasa, capital of the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire.

Congo is Africa's fourth largest oil producer, and petrol money which helped fan the flames of the conflict could be usefully channelled into reversing the damage in Brazzaville. — *The Observer*

Bomb targets Lanka tourists

Flora Botsford in Colombo and agencies

A TRUCK bomb and gun battles devastated the Sri Lankan capital's business district last week, killing at least 15 people in one of Colombo's worst outrages during 14 years of civil war. More than 100 people were injured, including 35 foreigners. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are suspected of being behind the attack.

The guerrillas drove a 20-tonne lorry packed with explosives into the car park of Colombo's luxury Galadari hotel, after shooting dead a group of security guards, the Sri Lankan authorities said.

About 20 people were freed unharmed by troops after being trapped for some hours in Lake House, a government newspaper building, where at least three of about eight suspected Tamil Tiger gunmen fled after the blast. Two of the guerrillas blew themselves up when commandos stormed the building, officials said. A third was shot near a Buddhist temple.

According to news reports this week, the bombs caused more than $5 million worth of damage.

On Monday, local newspapers quoted the Colombo city deputy inspector general, D M Dissanayake, as saying that some 100 people had been detained by police for interrogation. He declined to give more information, saying it could harm the investigation.

The Sri Lankan High Commission in London accused the British government of being partially to blame for the blast. "The sad thing about all this is that the LTTE has its international headquarters here in London," said a spokesman. "Most of its funds are collected and distributed through London and it is the funds raised here that are being used to buy the guns and explosives used in Colombo."

It is believed that the Tamil Tigers deliberately targeted foreigners following the decision of the United States to place the organisation on its proscribed list this month.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga condemned the bomb attack as the work of "inhuman terrorists", but said the search for peace would not be derailed.

The Tamil Tigers have denied responsibility for the attack.

In January 1996 a powerful bomb destroyed the Central Bank in Colombo, killing more than 100 people.

Meanwhile at least 100 Tamil Tiger rebels and two Sri Lankan navy personnel were believed killed after a five-hour sea battle off the eastern coast last weekend, officials said. A defence ministry statement said that seven rebel boats were sunk in a battle after a fleet of naval vessels confronted a cluster of rebel boats carrying a large number of guerrillas.

● Child prostitution in Sri Lanka is being heavily promoted to foreigners on the Internet, fuelling an already rampant sex industry, the independent Island newspaper said on Monday.

Saudis hunt for illegals

Julian Borger

POLICE in Saudi Arabia are carrying out house-to-house searches and have set up checkpoints across the country in a hunt for illegal foreign workers after a deadline for their departure expired, newspaper reports and diplomats said this week.

Air and sea ports have been swamped by up to 100,000 Asian and African labourers in recent days in a chaotic exodus, but hundreds of thousands of migrant workers without valid permits apparently remain.

Many were unable to secure exit visas before the deadline on Friday last week. They could face six months in jail and a fine of more than $25,000. The interior minister, Prince Naif bin Abdul Aziz, warned that penalties would be strictly implemented.

A diplomat in Riyadh said conditions in overcrowded detention centres were becoming unbearable. "They are having to turn people away because there just isn't room, but we still haven't been told where they are taking them. To the jails I suppose, but there's no room there."

Thousands more foreign workers are waiting in makeshift camps at Jeddah for a place on a boat.

The police search has been concentrated in industrial districts of Riyadh and Jeddah, where the bulk of foreign workers — more than 60 per cent of the workforce — live.

About 4.3 million foreigners work in the kingdom, a third of the population. More than 700,000 were thought to have been without documents when the deadline was declared. Most were Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi. The Sudan News Agency confirmed that 100,000 were Sudanese.

Mohamed Ansari, the Indian ambassador, said 41,000 Indian workers had come to the embassy to ask for travel documents. They then had to go to the Saudi passport office for an exit visa. The process could take 10 days.

Najeeb Khilji, the welfare attaché at Pakistan's embassy in Riyadh, said 3,000 others had already left, and 2,000 more had applied for emergency passports but were still waiting for exit visas or transport.

Two ferries carrying more than 4,000 Indians and Pakistanis have left in the past few weeks. Conditions on board the overcrowded boats were reportedly abysmal. Two Pakistanis and one Indian died during the crossing.

Thousands of Somalis have also been expelled. Last weekend, the Somali Human Rights Centre in Mogadishu complained of inhumane treatment of deportees at the hands of the Saudi police. The centre said that Somali schoolchildren had been rounded up and expelled without being allowed to contact their parents.

The Saudi government has carried out annual mass expulsions since 1995, as part of a drive to create more jobs for its own population and to stem the annual flow abroad of $16 billion in remittances.

The Week

AMERICAN and Japanese officials reached agreement in principle to resolve a dispute over access to Japanese ports that had threatened to turn into an all-out trade war.

BEIJING has launched a campaign to win US business and public support as China's President Jiang Zemin prepares to pay his first visit to Washington.
Washington Post, page 18

JERZY BUZEK, a 57-year-old chemistry professor and a free market reformer, is to be Poland's new prime minister. He has promised to put crime, health care and social security reform at the top of his agenda.

THE election of a reformer, Milo Djukanovic, as president of Montenegro is a blow to Yugoslavia's President Slobodan Milosevic. Montenegro and Serbia make up the rump Yugoslavia.

WORLDWIDE trade in military equipment totalled $40 billion last year — an increase of 8 per cent over 1995, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies. Saudi Arabia was the largest importer, buying weaponry worth nearly $9 billion.
Comment, page 14

NIGERIAN opposition groups are piling on pressure for the country's expulsion from the Commonwealth at this week's summit in Edinburgh, insisting that the regime has not met conditions for staying in.

A HOSPITAL in Adelaide, Australia, is loath to accept $750,000 from Frank Gilford, the brother of a nurse murdered in Saudi Arabia, who has received the money as part of a settlement to waive his right to demand the death penalty for the British nurse charged with his sister's killing.

ISRAEL'S attorney-general ruled that a US teenage murder suspect could be extradited after the US Congress threatened to withhold aid if Samuel Scheinbein was not handed over.

A BOY of 15 who beheaded a youngster in a crime that shocked Japan was sentenced indefinitely to a juvenile prison. He was charged with assaults on five children, two of whom died.

THE black separatist leader Louis Farrakhan announced he intends to preside over a mass wedding of 10,000 couples in a multiracial ceremony in Washington in 2000.

JAMES MICHENER, the best-selling US novelist who wrote historical-geographic blockbusters, has died at the age of 90, two days after the death of Harold Robbins, aged 81, who wrote The Carpetbaggers.
Obituaries, pages 20, 35

West must keep faith with Kabila

COMMENT
Chris McGreal

LAURENT Kabila, president of the Democratic Republic of Congo, has developed the knack of losing friends fast. Governments that were ready to throw aid his way — if for no other reason than to assuage their guilt about giving Mr Kabila's predecessor, Mobutu Sese Seko, so much money for his private indulgences — are shying away. And Mr Kabila's Rwandan backers are increasing exasperated at his reluctance to listen to their "advice".

He even managed to offend Nelson Mandela by dismissing his mediation efforts towards the end of the civil war. The South African leader is not the type of man a new African president wants to insult.

So it comes as no surprise to the United Nations investigators charged with tramping around eastern Congo in search of mass graves that Mr Kabila has brushed aside pressure from potential allies and blocked their expedition. But his stubbornness is evidence of his weakness, not his strength.

Five months after seizing power, Mr Kabila can hardly be said to be in control of his country. The Rwandan soldiers who swept him to victory remain the dominant force in eastern Congo where most of the massacres took place. The region is plagued by instability, much of it a continuation of confrontations that began beyond the former Zaire's borders.

Mr Kabila is probably not in a position to bow to the UN's demand even if he were inclined to. Other, more powerful forces have every reason to keep prying eyes away. The UN knows this. The United States and the European Union know this. If questions are to be asked and pressure brought to bear, then the focus should be on the Rwandan authorities. But the fiction is maintained that Mr Kabila is the authority and if atrocities were committed, it was by troops under his command.

As they tramp down this blind alley, Washington and Brussels are undecided whether to withhold assistance from Mr Kabila until he co-operates, or to view the mass killings in the east as an issue separate from the running of Congo today.

The US plans to send a delegation to the capital, Kinshasa, led by its UN ambassador, Bill Richardson, to put pressure on Mr Kabila. There is no reason to believe it will be any more successful than previous efforts.

The UN's moral authority over Mr Kabila, or anyone else in Central Africa for that matter, is not great. An organisation that turned tail and ran at the start of the Rwandan genocide and then kept mass murderers fed and watered in the sprawling Hutu refugee camps commands little but contempt in the region. Washington, Paris and Brussels are hardly in a better position after backing Mobutu for decades. This leaves the US and others torn between punitive measures and trying to buy Mr Kabila off. But what if Mr Richardson succeeds? Even less clear in the minds of US and EU officials is what they will do if the UN investigation turns up hard evidence of a systematic slaughter of Hutu refugees.

Mr Kabila's administration needs to be judged not by what happened in eastern Congo during the civil war but by how they administer the country from now on. The massacres are less a Congolese issue than a Rwandan one. Most of the victims were Rwandan Hutus. It is likely that most of the killers were Rwandan Tutsis.

Isolation and de facto sanctions in the form of withholding aid will severely set back any attempt by Mr Kabila at reconstruction.

Mr Kabila is stubborn, less than adept at dealing with the international community and constrained by authoritarian views he held for decades in obscurity. But there is nothing to be gained for Congo or Central Africa by isolating his administration and seeing it fail.

Soros to give $500m for Russia charity

Tom Whitehouse in Moscow

THE billionaire financier George Soros this week announced plans to spend $500 million on charitable projects in Russia over the next three years — and denied there was a contradiction between his philanthropic and business interests.

Having only last year condemned Russia's business and political élite as "robber capitalists" and suggested he was considering pulling out of the market, Mr Soros said on Monday that the $2 billion he was now investing in the Russian market had not compromised his independence. "I have not become a player in Russian politics," he said. "I've become a player in the Russian market."

Mr Soros joined forces with Russia's leading investment banker, Vladimir Potanin, in a winning but controversial bid for a quarter of the state telecommunications company, Svyazinvest. This prompted accusations that he was taking part in a political war among bankers over the spoils of privatisation.

He said he was aware of "the internecine war going on in the oligarchy", but denied taking sides.

Asked if he was now bolstering the businessmen he had denounced, his reply was evasive but revealing. "They are the players at the present time and they must make the transition from acting as robber capitalists to legitimate capitalists. This is not the way I imagined the development of Russia after the collapse of communism, but that's the way it is."

Mr Soros's activities have provoked criticism throughout the former Soviet bloc.

His Open Society Institute has worked in Russia for 10 years, during which time $350 million has been donated. But Mr Soros, a Hungarian Jew who fled the Nazis as a child, has been accused of interfering in education by publishing text books deemed too Western in their interpretation of Russian history. Critics also say he has encouraged a brain drain by giving travel grants to scientists, artists and administrators.

Architect Frank Gehry's futuristic Guggenheim museum in Bilbao was inaugurated by Spain's King Juan Carlos last week. Security surrounding the king's visit was stepped up after a policeman died as he foiled a bomb attack by the Basque separatist guerrilla group ETA PHOTOGRAPH: SANTIAGO LYON

Colonial victims seek settlement

Ian Black

TONY BLAIR will come face to face with a skeleton from Britain's colonial cupboard at the Commonwealth summit in Edinburgh this weekend when Indian Ocean islanders demand to be allowed to return to a territory leased by Britain to the United States as an air base during the height of the cold war.

Navinchadra Ramgoolam, prime minister of Mauritius, plans to buttonhole Mr Blair at the summit and press for justice in a case that diplomats say does not sit happily with the Government's "ethical" foreign policy.

Dr Ramgoolam wants the Prime Minister to allow the resettlement of about 400 Ilois people, the indigenous inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago — now called British Indian Ocean Territory (Biot) — and dominated by the US military base of Diego Garcia.

The Ilois have been living in Mauritius since their resettlement in the 1960s, but many have faced difficulties of adjustment and want to return, even if only to uninhabited islands.

Britain paid compensation to the Ilois in 1972 and 1982, and has said that the territory could be returned to Mauritius when it is no longer needed. But the US lease of Diego Garcia, the main island, means it is out of British control. The US has rejected the resettlement demand.

The Foreign Office insists that the Ilois agreed that the British payments were "full and final settlement of all claims and that they would have no right of return".

A spokesman said last week: "We are in no doubt about UK sovereignty over Chagos. However, successive British governments have undertaken to cede the islands to Mauritius when they are longer needed for defence purposes." But he added: "The role of the defence facility has become increasingly important over the last decade in supporting peace and stability in the region."

"Like many Commonwealth countries, the Mauritians feel the summit is an opportunity to raise long-standing contentious issues afresh with a new government, especially one which is practising an ethical foreign policy," one diplomat said. "Questions of right and wrong must come into play."

Diego Garcia was used for the bombing of Iraq in the Gulf war and in support of the ill-fated United Nations intervention in Somalia.

Ironically, its use by US nuclear-armed B-52 bombers was the subject of a protest to the then Conservative government in 1981 by Robin Cook, then a Labour Treasury spokesman.

Mr Cook, now Foreign Secretary, was said to have "evaded the issue" when Diego Garcia was raised by his Mauritian counterpart at the UN last month.

The future of Biot is being scrutinised in a Foreign Office review of Britain's 13 remaining dependent territories, ordered during the summer in the wake of the crisis on the volcano-stricken Caribbean island of Montserrat.

Apartheid ministers deny crimes

David Beresford in Johannesburg

THE limitations of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission were brought home last week when a notorious former police minister, Adriaan Vlok, was left unshaken in his protestations that he was not to blame for human rights abuses.

"I tried to get police to accept that they had to treat blacks and whites equally," declared the man under whose political control the police ran a fully-equipped assassination unit.

"In the police I became unpopular because I said 'rather let us go in with a smile instead of a *sjambok* [rhino-hide whip]'. I said 'you don't beat people if it is not necessary'."

Commissioners tried with mounting frustration to pin him down on what was described as an epic gap between the perspectives of the police and their political masters. But Mr Vlok – testifying about the defunct State Security Council — insisted he was kept in the dark by lying police commanders.

Earlier, the former long-serving foreign minister, Pik Botha, asked "God's forgiveness" for failing to do more to prevent atrocities committed under the National Party's rule, which he blamed on the security services.

Asked about the meaning of references in security council documents to the "elimination", "destroying" and "neutralisation" of anti-apartheid activists, Mr Botha replied that the terms should not be taken out of context. If the words were used in relation to "hot-pursuit" cross-border raids they could imply the killing of "terrorists", but in a domestic context could refer to detention without trial.

Mr Botha said all cabinet ministers suspected the police were engaged in illegal activities, including the killing and torturing of the government's opponents.

"The decisive question is not whether we as a cabinet approved the killing of a specific political opponent," he said. "The question is whether we should have done more to ensure that it did not happen. I deeply regret this omission. God forgive me."

Meanwhile Nelson Mandela has turned controversy about his planned visit to Libya this week into a racial issue, saying that United States criticism of his trip is symptomatic of discriminatory international attitudes towards blacks.

The South African president precipitated the row with Washington by announcing that he would be travelling by road to Libya — ducking United Nations sanctions on flights into the pariah country — to meet the Libyan leader, Muammar Gadafy.

In Cairo on Monday, the South African foreign minister, Alfred Nzo, called for an end to UN sanctions against Libya, saying "there is no point in exposing the population of Libya collectively to punishment".

Old enmity frozen in time

The Kashmir dispute is as intractable as ever. **Suzanne Goldenberg** reports from Chakothi

IT WAS morning and Mohammed Ashraf and his son were leading their cattle out to graze when an explosion blew the blade off his sickle and sent it spiralling through the air.

Mr Ashraf was thrown to the ground. "There were so many stones flying all around, it was as if the air had turned to dust." When he raised his face from the earth, his son was dead, felled by a shell from the heights overlooking the Kaliana valley which are controlled by the Indian army.

He hands over the slip of paper from the Pakistani military authorities certifying that his son, Rizwan, had "embraced martyrdom" at the age of 14. Rizwan was among 10 Pakistani villagers killed in the Chakothi area on August 23, one of the heaviest civilian tolls for many years along a 750km boundary between India and Pakistan that is known as the Line Of Control.

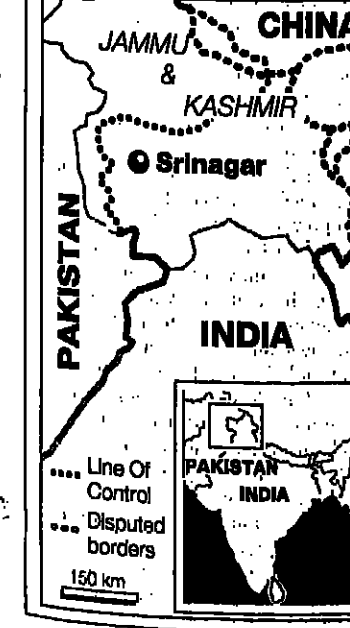
In New Delhi and Islamabad, the worsening situation has been seen as a sign that despite politicians' apparent commitment to a dialogue resumed earlier this year, the dispute over Kashmir is as intractable as ever.

On the western side lies Azad (free) Kashmir — or as the Indians call it, Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. On the other is the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir — or in Pakistani parlance, Held Kashmir.

Meandering between rivulets and heights of up to 3,100 metres, this is no ordinary border but the spot where Indian and Pakistani tanks were halted in 1949 during their first war over Kashmir.

Those battle lines have been frozen in time. At some points the two armies, deployed in battle formation across some of the world's most heavily mined terrain, are only a few metres apart. "For the last 50 years we have been sitting and staring face to face," says Brigadier Haidar Khan at his headquarters in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Kashmir.

Mr Ashraf's village lies about 65km to the southeast in the valley of Kaliana, which straddles the Line Of Control. Kaliana, like hundreds of Pakistani hamlets within a mile of the line, is off-limits to ordinary Pakistanis and foreigners.



Even this army camp at Chakothi, where Mr Ashraf and others have arrived bearing polythene bags of shrapnel, mortar fins and bullets to show the commander, is normally a restricted area.

A steep climb uphill and Colonel Ejaz Ahmed arrives at the Pakistani line of bunkers, which are nestled into a hilltop. Even without field-glasses, it is possible to pick out the Indian machine-gun nests and observation posts on the opposite ridge. A lone green and white flag marks the last Pakistani sentry post; the colonel says his Indian counterpart is only a dozen metres away.

Fifty years ago, the road snaking through the valley below was the sole route between Rawalpindi and Srinagar. Only 11km separate Chakothi from the town of Uri, on the Indian side of the line, but this road — like many others on the Pakistani side of the line — has been closed for eight years because, the military says, of Indian sniper fire.

There are sounds of gunfire most nights, but life has gone on. While India has forcibly removed civilians from its side of the line since 1947, there are still hundreds of hamlets on the Pakistani side, and an estimated 20,000 civilians in the Kaliana valley.

However, on the morning of August 23 villages in Kaliana and other areas of the line were subjected to a barrage of heavy artillery and mortar fire for several hours. In Chakothi alone, according to Brig Khan, 10 civilians were killed and 20 wounded. "They [the Indian army] used everything they had," he says.

On September 30, Pakistan struck back, killing 17 people in shelling of the town of Kargil, in Indian Kashmir. Indian forces retaliated the next day and it was not for another week, after conversations between the Indian and Pakistani prime ministers, that the shelling stopped.

It is impossible to know the extent of casualties along the Line Of Control since August. Both armies favour grandiose claims about wiping out bunkers bristling with soldiers; both are loath to admit civilian casualties.

Earlier this year, the two countries resumed a dialogue that was broken off in 1994, generating popular enthusiasm for better relations. However, talks in Islamabad last month that were to have set out mechanisms for solving problems broke down.

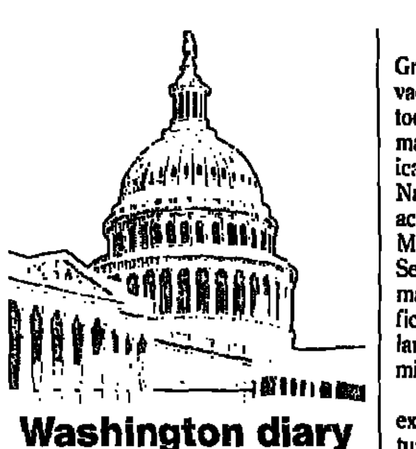
In New Delhi, an external affairs official expressed optimism. "I don't think it's beyond the ingenuity of India and Pakistan to come to a solution."

Brig Khan is unimpressed. "We are the people who would be the first to see the effects of a change, no matter what is said in the foreign ministries, but we haven't seen a difference so far."

Queen turns pawn, page 14



Capital gripped by monumental mania



Washington diary

Martin Kettle

IT WAS more than a century after the founding of the United States before George Washington was commemorated by the monument that stands midway along the Mall in the centre of the city that bears his name.

But in the hundred or so years since then, Washington DC has become increasingly a place of other and lesser monuments. It would be an exaggeration to say that the city is littered with them, but it is getting that way. The number of monuments in Washington is growing faster than before, while the justification for them is becoming increasingly open to question.

In the beginning, it was simple. It was just presidents who got memorials. Washington the leader, then Lincoln the saviour, followed, more than a century after his death, by Jefferson the founder. Just recently, a more modest Franklin Roosevelt memorial has been added to this selectively august list, but FDR is an unfashionably liberal figure these days and it does not take much to imagine the pressure that the right may soon mount for an Eisenhower, or even a Reagan, monument.

But presidents were just the start. Gradually, Washington is being invaded by military commemorations too. The latest of Washington's many monuments was formally dedicated last Saturday. Located in the National Cemetery in Arlington, just across the Potomac river from the Mall, the Women in Military Service Memorial commemorates many people whose role and sacrifices in war and peace were regularly overlooked in most other military monuments.

As such, however, the memorial exactly embodies the changing nature of monument-building mentality in late 20th century America. Once upon a time, Washington's monuments implied the coming together of the nation as a whole, whereas today they memorialise not its unification but its sectionalisation.

The inadvertent turning point in this process, it is now apparent, was the success of what is Washington's most frequently visited monument, the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, which opened in 1982. The Vietnam memorial, a powerful and emotive marble-lined cleft in the ground that is always thronged with pilgrims, has inaugurated a continuing specialisation of wartime commemorations in Washington.

If those Vietnam veterans can have a memorial, reasoned the Korean war veterans when they saw it, then why can't we have one too? There was no logical reason whatever why not, so now the Korean vets are commemorated by the Potomac too.

And if the Korean and the Vietnam vets can get one, said the second world war veterans, then what about us? How can you argue with our case for a memorial at least as fine as theirs? And of course, you can't argue with it, so Congress has approved a $100 million memorial to these veterans.



Second world war veterans attend the dedication of The Women in Military Service Memorial PHOTO TIM SLOAN

Critics, and even more than a few supporters, are becoming alarmed by this war memorial domino effect. First, because there is almost no end to the process. There may not be many survivors of General Pershing's American armies from the first world war left to press the case for their own monument, but there can be no reason to deny them what has now been granted to their successors. And, after that, what about the United States' other 20th century wars?

The second anxiety concerns the aesthetic quality of the memorials. In Washington's case, and even with the Vietnam memorial, the appropriateness of the monuments was the subject of intense and prolonged discussion. That is not the case any longer, and aesthetics has been overwhelmed by political blackmail. The second world war memorial earmarked for the Mall is a huge, sprawling collection of columns, walls and even a mini-museum. It is more a visitors' centre than a memorial, and it is now being scaled down, thank goodness. The danger, though, remains. And the more memorials of this kind there are, the more difficult it will be to maintain quality control, the more cluttered the original simple symmetry of the Mall becomes, and the more the currency of collective memory is debased.

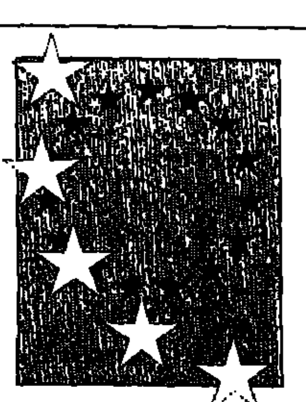
As if that were not enough, the memorial industry is splitting up into all kinds of other specialist lobbies competing for the public's feelings. The Arlington women's memorial is the largest case in point. But there is already a Vietnam women's memorial too. And Congress has given approval for both a Black Revolutionary War Patriots Memorial and also a Black Civil War Troops Memorial. Two years from now, the National Japanese American Memorial will be ready too.

This is, to all but the partisans, a monumental madness. If the proliferation continues at this rate — and there is no reason why it should not — then those who are responsible for assessing such projects in Washington think they will be looking for 60 new sites for memorials and more than 10 special interest commemorative museums to place alongside the Holocaust Museum that was opened here five years ago.

Memorialisation cannot be stopped, any more than history itself can. But the Washington monument mania is a sign that the US has changed. Those first monuments were and are imposing tributes to the ideals that founded and sustained the republic. Even the most politically sensitive of them, the Lincoln Memorial, is indisputably a statement about the abiding unity of the nation and its peoples.

Today's monuments do not pretend to rise above difference. Instead, they celebrate it. They mark a nation that is not bound together, but one which increasingly exists only in multiple subordinate identities. This is a fashionable view to take of the late 20th century US identity — but it is one thing to chase a rainbow, quite another to set it in stone.

Marx's ideas gain fresh currency



Europe this week

Martin Walker

A SPECTRE has been haunting Europe. And, oddly enough, it is the same one that Karl Marx described when he wrote the opening words to The Communist Manifesto almost 150 years ago. In every government crisis that fluttered the European dovecotes last week, the communists played a crucial role.

In the Russian Duma, the communists were leading the charge against Boris Yeltsin's vital budget. In France, as junior partners in Lionel Jospin's coalition government, the communists battled to hold the government to its electoral promise to tackle unemployment by moving to a 35-hour week and sharing out the available work.

In Italy, Communist Refoundation's refusal to support the latest round of welfare and pension cuts forced the resignation of the centre-left government of Romano Prodi, and again called into question Italy's ability to qualify for European monetary union.

In each of these battles, the communists either face or were handed a sharp tactical defeat, just as the post-communist Alliance of the Democratic Left party in Poland were voted out of office last month. In France, the communists seem to have been finessed by the government's plan for a slow and consensual shift to a shorter working week. And in Italy the majority political consensus to pay whatever it costs socially to meet the economic conditions for EMU slowly but surely crushed the communist revolt.

Fausto Bertinotti, the only slightly reformed Italian communist leader, appears to have badly misjudged the public mood. This month in Assisi, in the "Red Belt" of the party's heartland, he was booed and jeered by the crowds as he toured the earthquake ruins. The Italian press are already writing his party's political obituary.

The astonishing feature of this process is how badly the demoralised old structures and parties of the European left are tackling what should, in theory, be their opportunity. Mass unemployment in Germany and France go hand-in-hand with a wild stock market boom, which has seen the S&P Europe index almost double over the past 18 months. Inflation appears to have been tamed, but the real incomes of most Europeans have been stagnant or declining while corporate profits and stock prices have been soaring. But the trade unions are cowed, and the traditional parties of the social democratic left are, like Tony Blair, moving to a centrist accommodation with this new balance of socio-economic power.

"I think when historians look back at the last quarter of the 20th century, the shift from labour to capital, the almost unprecedented shift of money and power up the income pyramid, is going to be their number one focus," says Alan Blinder, the liberal academic economist from Princeton who sat on the board of the United States Federal Reserve. He thinks the US and much of the rest of the developed world have seen an historic and strategic victory for capital over labour, a domestic echo of the defeat of the Soviet Union in the cold war.

Yet that defeat could, in practice, have helped the left, freeing it from the unhappy guilt by association with the Soviet state from which capitalism's critics suffered since Stalin's day. A left unburdened by gulags might have been able to establish the moral authority to underpin a new campaign against the unemployment, the depressed wages and the welfare cuts that come with globalisation.

It may be that the antique communist parties of France and Italy are the wrong vehicles to rise to this opportunity. Perhaps the political landscape has so utterly changed that it now makes sense for the British opposition to EMU to be driven from the right.

But it would be unwise to hail Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" and forget about Marx, after a week of manic trans-European mergers that echo the latter's predictions about capitalism's drive to monopoly. Unaffected by the political turmoil, Italy's Generali insurance group bid $9.3 billion for France's Assurances Generales. The $37 billion merger between Guinness and Grand Met won approval, and BAT announced the sale of its insurance holding to Zurich Group for more than $30 billion.

It also seems premature to hail capitalism's global triumph as Japan's five-year stall goes on, Southeast Asian currencies implode and Europe looks for work. The old communists may be losing a tactical battle, but the Marxist spectre of the struggle between capital and labour that called them into life has not been laid to rest.

After all, it is not yet clear that the communists of France and Italy have entirely lost their campaign. In both countries the target of the 35-hour week has now been set, to be phased in over the next four years by agreement rather than by regulation. And in both countries the communists remain inside the government coalitions, having learned something about power as well as principle.

Hard-hearted capitalists argue that this simply makes more inevitable the evil day when French and Italian workers will finally price themselves and their industries out of the global market, and be forced to crawl back on whatever terms management sets. But then it was hard-hearted capitalists, careless of the delicate social equation between jobs and profits that has underpinned the long-successful European model, who inspired Marx to the ideas that have so influenced the world for the past 150 years.

Kidnapped by labour: Hanif Mohamed (above right), hard at work in a bakery, is 10; the boy below is even younger PHOTOGRAPHS SEAN SMITH

When work is the lesser of two evils

The world wrings its hands over child labour, but what is to be done to stop it? **Owen Bowcott** finds that banning children from work in Bangladesh may not be the best answer to poverty and exploitation

HANIF MOHAMED is 10 years old. For the past two years he has loaded and unpacked trays of sweet pastries from the scorching mouth of a domed brick oven — often seven days a week, up to 17 hours a day.

The walls of the bakery where he slaves in the Mirpur district of Dhaka are blackened and charred with congealed grime. The stench of an open sewer drifts into the windowless lodging room, across a muddy back yard, which he shares with a dozen youngsters.

He has never been to school nor had a holiday since leaving his native village. Most of the 350 takas ($8) he earns each month is, he says, sent to support his family: "I can spend a little if I want." His boss, anxious about the questioning, pushes foward his justification. "Hanif is new here," he claims. "He is an apprentice learning the trade. His food is free."

Child labour is flourishing in Bangladesh and permeates much of the developing world. Shock revelations about grim conditions endured by under-age workers hit the headlines with increasing frequency as the globalised economy links more and more Western consumers to the remotest corners of the world.

Earlier this summer, a report by the charity Christian Aid claimed that Indian children as young as seven were stitching footballs bearing a picture of the former Manchester United striker, Eric Cantona. The club denied that the balls were being manufactured for them and insisted that their suppliers are required to give undertakings forgoing the use of child labour.

No one in Britain wants to be associated with the outrage generated by the employment of school-age youngsters. This month, however, the Indian Sportsgoods Manufacturers and Exporters Association published its own findings in an attempt to rebut the allegations, claiming that the Christian Aid report had "attacked our traditional family values in which the work culture involves the entire family as a unit".

Seen through the desperation of the disadvantaged, the moral imperative may indeed look very different. In Bangladesh, a country where 67 per cent of those under five are classified as malnourished, it is often extreme poverty which drives parents to send their own infants out to augment pitiful incomes.

The persistence of child labour in the poorest nations is now forcing the West to reassess how it pursues its crusading campaigns to abolish under-age work and promote fair trade standards. At a joint conference to be convened in Oslo this month by the UN's children's body Unicef and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the governments of more than 40 states — including the UK, US, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan — will review plans about what can be done for the 200 million children below the age of 15 who are estimated to be working.

Translating indignation about violated childhoods into a force for social improvement in the Third World has proved far more complex than at first imagined. In some cases it has provoked open resentment of US and European actions.

Typical are the views of Peter Stalker of Unicef's Dhaka office: "It may mollify workers in Western countries who feel exposed to unfair competition to follow a strict principle of eliminating children from workplaces. It may reassure concerned consumers who feel their goods are 'contaminated' with child labour. But it may actually hurt the children."

These tensions are evident in Bangladesh, one of the first countries threatened with a selective boycott by Western consumers. Four years ago, Senator Tom Harkin introduced a bill into the US Congress proposing trade sanctions banning the importation of Bangladeshi clothing produced by child labour. Faced with the loss of lucrative markets, the factory owners responded by instantly dismissing as many as 50,000 under-age workers from the burgeoning garments industry.

Many of the sacked children were left destitute. Rather than entering state primary schools, which do not open up an immediate avenue to employment, many resorted to hazardous forms of work such as sorting rubbish, street scavenging, prostitution, brick-breaking, or leather work. The numbers of homeless children also increased.

As aid agencies become more aware of the side-effects of clamping down on child labour they have begun to rethink their approach. A ground-breaking Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Unicef and the ILO is now presented as a model for how other private industries might be persuaded to gradually reduce their child labour force.





The key to its success has been a rigorous inspection system, designed to prevent factories sneaking children back on to their crowded floors. A further section of the agreement provides for the BGMEA to contribute $250,000 a year to pay dismissed children 300 takas ($7) a month as an encouragement for them to attend school.

Firms which operate within the MOU are required to open their doors to unannounced inspectors.

One such visit to the premises of Festive (PVT) Ltd in Mirpur that I witnessed revealed hundreds of women cutting cloth, sewing shorts, packing completed shirts into plastic bags and stapling price labels in the cramped and humid atmosphere; but no underage children. The clothes being made were labelled "Gola", a British sportswear trademark.

Though on this occasion the efforts of the inspectors scanning faces for those suspected of being under 14 were in vain, in May another team did discover five children working in the Festive factory whom they believed to be aged only 12 or 13; in Bangladesh, few possess birth certificates and many are genuinely ignorant of their age. Iqbal Hussein, the managing director, insisted that the children picked out then had looked under 14 because "it's difficult to judge age in Bangladesh, they are not well-nourished". He added that medical tests had been conducted to establish their age. The BGMEA's chairman, Mostafa Golam Quddus, later confirmed that Festive's appeal over the children had been turned down and the firm duly "cautioned".

Hussein was not convinced that banning child labour was the best policy. "I would have thought they would be better protected here," he said. "A mother who used to bring her girl of 13 to the factory came in one day and said the child had been raped. They are safer coming to the factory than roaming around."

The Gola-labelled goods are being imported into Britain by Ethel Austin, a Merseyside company whose buying director, Terry Bockley, said the order had been placed with Festive through an agent approved by the BGMEA in July, after the children had been removed by the inspectors. "We take a very specific stance that we don't want to be involved in factories indulging in child labour," he said. "We had an audit done by the manufacturers' association to ensure that the factory is on an approved list."

The firm which owns the Gola brand name, Jacobson and Sons, said it had only recently started licensing, had inherited a network of existing licensees and did not directly import or sell garments. "Our client does not condone, nor has it ever, the use of child labour," lawyers for the firm said.

One example of how pervasive child labour is within Bangladesh came at the state-run Ahasnia Orphanage in Dhaka which British Airways recently announced it plans to support. In a shed at the back of the compound, a 16-year-old girl was working seven hours a day at a weaving frame. "The money goes to the orphanage because they get everything free of cost," explained the overseer.

BA, which has aided the nearby Sreepur Orphanage for the past decade, admitted that it had not been aware that children were working at Ahasnia. "It was identified back in June as somewhere that could do with help," a spokeswoman added. "We would hope that any support we give would influence what happens there and maybe eradicate it [child labour]."

Kazi Omar Khayam, a journalist, aged 17, who has made his name in Bangladesh campaigning against child labour, accepts that in some cases it can be the lesser of two evils. "If children don't work, they will die. They are working for food."

A clear division is apparent between those in the West who want immediate abolition and those, mainly in the underdeveloped world, who accept that progress may be more gradual as poorer societies become industrialised.

TORN between the impoverished desperation of Bangladesh's poor and disapproval of exploitation, Unicef staff in Dhaka now draw a distinction between "child labour" and "child work". There is hazardous labour, such as Mohamed's physically abusive days in a sweltering bakery; and then there is part-time work, such as helping parents gather in a harvest, or domestic work, which allows time for schooling. The latter, they imply, may be temporarily inevitable in an emerging society.

Impatient for action, the US Congress earlier this month passed legislation banning the importation of goods made by indentured or enslaved child labour. The bill, backed by a coalition of labour and human rights groups, is targeted chiefly at bonded child labour in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal.

One way or another, the message that education is the key to cracking the problem appears to be getting through — even if it is for reasons of economic self-interest. Belatedly, Bangladesh has appreciated that unless it educates its workforce it will never become a southeast Asian tiger economy. This year the government announced that it would extend compulsory education from up to the age of 10 to up to 14. But, as is so often the way with these things, no date for implementing the plan has yet been announced.

Bordeaux buries its shame in a dark tunnel

Paul Webster reports on a city that is unwilling to examine its years of Nazi collaboration

A DIMLY lit disused tunnel running under the Gare St Jean in Bordeaux is a sinister forgotten relic of the Atlantic port's four years of collaboration with the Nazis, which even local historians find too painful to recall.

The tunnel, with its faded painted orders in German and French to "keep moving", was used at night to take Jewish families to trains heading for the Drancy concentration camp near Paris for shipment to the gas chambers. Marked by bullet holes where executions took place, it hid the old, the children, the sick and the fearful from public sympathy.

Railwaymen guiding the occasional visitor along the corridor say the authorities cannot decide whether it should be blocked up for ever or opened as a permanent memorial. But for the duration of Maurice Papon's 10-week trial for crimes against humanity, it has become an overpowering symbol of Bordeaux's buried past.

Ten years ago, Lyon took its courage in its hands during the trial of Klaus Barbie, the local Gestapo chief, and held exhibitions, conferences and marches to recall the savage years when the southeastern city was the capital of both resistance and collaboration.

But Bordeaux is not finding the transition from amnesia to vivid memory of treason and cowardice anywhere near so easy. Mr Papon's alleged role in the deportation of 1,560 Jews — about half the city's total — is only a part of a heritage which condemns Philippe Pétain's Vichy regime more thoroughly there than in almost any other city in France.

Bordeaux was occupied from June 1940 by a repressive German force, but historians feel that the city's puny defiance of the Nazis until the troops withdrew in August 1944 without a shot being fired remains too sensitive an issue.

It was never in the interests of the Gaullist city council to reveal the ineffectiveness of wartime resistance, or the cover-up during the 50 years when Jacques Chaban-Delmas was mayor before the last Gaullist prime minister, Alain Juppé, took over.

Mr Papon's trial has confirmed the impression that Charles de Gaulle turned a blind eye to senior Vichy officials' records in the race to build up post-war conservative opposition to the powerful Communist party. Mr Papon was never questioned about his activities as head of the city's Jewish affairs section, and he went on to become Paris police chief in 1961 and a Gaullist minister in 1978.

But the level of Bordeaux's backing for Pétain was notorious from the day the marshal offered surrender on June 17, 1940 during a short stay in the city just as De Gaulle flew to Britain from Bordeaux's Mérignac airport.

The previously socialist mayor, Adrien Marquet, became the first Vichy interior minister. Later, his close co-operation with the prime minister, Pierre Laval, led to his imprisonment at the liberation. The sentence was only nominal, allowing him to play an active role in rightwing politics after the war.

Archbishop Maurice Feltin's zealous support for collaboration resulted in his temporary disgrace, alongside 24 other members of the hierarchy, in 1944, but his subsequent friendship with Mr Chaban-Delmas ensured his rapid rehabilitation and eventual promotion to Archbishop of Paris.

Compromises with the Nazis in this most bourgeois of cities were most striking among the winegrowers, whose families still control the industry. They accepted an amiable and profitable collaboration with a German Weinführer, who bought most of the crop.

At the liberation, a secretary leaked reports on the eagerness of local chateaux owners to deal with the Nazis which Michel Bergés, who is examining these records, described as "explosive".

"The archives show a really convivial, family sort of atmosphere of German and French co-operation, as well as a remarkable leap in vineyard profits," he said.

There are many stories of heroism, ranging from resistance activity resulting in 300 executions to the literary revolt of Bordeaux's Nobel literature laureate, François Mauriac, who was disgusted by the persecution of Jews.

Resistance began with the execution of a local man who tried to pull down the Nazi flag when the Germans arrived in August 1940. But there was to be no surge of rebellion after the Allied invasion in 1944, like that by which Paris and some other cities recovered their honour.

Gabriel Delaunay, the Gaullist put in charge of the area at the liberation, said there had been hostility to the Nazis but the resistance movement was selfish and divided, took few risks, and played no real part in hastening the city's freedom.

In fact, the Germans turned around the biggest resistance group with the help of the French police and an impressive network of informers. Resistance in the area was so disorganised that two months after Normandy the last group of deportees was led through the tunnel to board cattle trucks that left for Germany without any reaction from Bordeaux's shattered secret army.

Jon Henley in Paris adds: As immigrant groups commemorated a police massacre of Algerian protesters in Paris 36 years ago, a former prime minister took the witness stand last week to praise Mr Papon, who was the capital's police chief at the time.

Raymond Barre said Mr Papon was loyal, competent and good at his job. But he said he knew nothing of Mr Papon's wartime activities when he picked him to be a minister.

Olivier Guichard, a former justice and education minister, said that President de Gaulle always referred to Mr Papon as "a good servant".

The Week in Britain James Lewis

This is not justice, says disgraced former minister

NEIL HAMILTON, the former MP for Tatton fighting to clear his name after being found guilty of taking cash to ask questions in Parliament, launched an astonishing series of attacks on his accusers when he appeared before the Commons Standards and Privileges Committee.

Mr Hamilton was heard in silence for more than two hours as he protested his innocence. He first went for Sir Gordon Downey, the parliamentary standards commissioner, who concluded that he had received between £18,000 and £25,000 from the owner of Harrods, Mohamed Al Fayed. That was a "cavalier" conclusion. "Given that the consequences for me and my family are so momentous, it is a positive disgrace. This isn't justice."

As for Mr Al Fayed, he had "a well-known record of deceit and invention", said Mr Hamilton, who went on to describe how security staff at Harrods had been instructed by the owner to break into a store safe deposit box belonging to Tiny Rowland, a business rival.

The essence of Mr Hamilton's case was that Sir Gordon had condemned him to "a life of opprobrium and unemployment" on the insufficiently-tested evidence of a liar, Mr Al Fayed; corroborated by other liars, Harrods employees; and reported by yet more liars, the Guardian journalists who first shed light on the "cash for questions" affair.

Mr Hamilton compared himself to the Bridgewater Four, unjustly imprisoned for 19 years, and with the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six, also released from prison after judges deemed their convictions to be unsafe.

There would be no justice, said Mr Hamilton, until the witnesses against him were subjected to hostile cross-examination. That, however, would also have to involve hostile cross-examination of Mr Hamilton — a costly procedure which could go on for weeks. The committee may simply decide to endorse the report of Sir Gordon.

THE HAMILTON hearing revived the "sleaze" headlines which helped to bring down the Major government. And there was more of the same when Piers Merchant, who had managed to get re-elected as the MP for Beckenham despite being photographed kissing a teenage "hostess" in a park, resigned after newspapers published further stories about his alleged liaison.

A tabloid Sunday paper published 12 pages of Mr Merchant's comings and goings with an 18-year-old former night club hostess, Anna Cox.

Mr Merchant, aged 46, initially decided to tough it out, saying that he and Miss Cox were working on a book about the tabloid press, but later resigned to shield his family — and Miss Cox and her family — "from intensive and continued intrusion into our private lives".

During the election, the Tory hierarchy pushed ineffectively for the resignations of Messrs Merchant and Hamilton. But the new leader, William Hague, made it clear that Mr Merchant's resignation was his own affair.

KEITH HELLAWELL, the former chief constable of West Yorkshire, who was appointed as the Government's first "drugs tsar", once said he foresaw the day when cannabis would be decriminalised. He had to disown that comment, since legalisation is absolutely not foreseeable either by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, who appointed him, or by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw.

Addiction specialists were relieved to learn that the tsar was not about to take the disastrous American path and put more emphasis on enforcement. Mr Hellawell, a "modernist" as a policeman, pledged to target pop icons who highlight the supposed benefits of drugs.

His official job title is head of the Anti-Drugs Co-ordinating Unit in the Cabinet Office. But the unit will get no new money, and the tsar can do little more than advise, though he will have direct access to Mr Blair.

WESTMINSTER press officers embarked on a collision course with the Government over political interference by "spin doctors" in the presentation of policy. They complained to their union that they were being unfairly blamed when ministers got a bad press for new initiatives and expressed anger that many of the top jobs were being taken by outsiders — notably Alastair Campbell as the Prime Minister's press secretary, and the colourful Charlie Whelan, who does the same job for the Chancellor.

Mr Campbell recently ordered press officers to "sharpen up" their act, and Whitehall has been ordered to set up a media monitoring unit — dubbed the Ministry of Truth by sceptical civil servants — modelled on Labour's slick PR operation. But seven ministries have lost their directors of information since the election. Most have gone after being in dispute with their ministers.

RATS that once spread the plague across Britain are increasing in number again. And a conference called to consider solutions was told that the problem had worsened since privatisation of the water authorities and a subsequent decline in the baiting and poisoning of rodents.

Today's 60 million rats outnumber the human population, and a 1995 survey showed a 40 per cent rise in domestic infestations over 10 years.





Past its shelf life . . . the Reading Room of the British Library, cherished for 140 years as a haven for the scholar, the writer and the short of sleep, is to close on Saturday as part of the Library's relocation to its new site on London's Euston Road PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN [illegible]

Libraries must plug in to IT

Dan Glaister

A £770 MILLION vision to transform Britain's public libraries was launched last week with the publication of the Library and Information Commission's report, New Library: The People's Network.

Commissioned by the previous government, the report recommends that neglect of the library sector be reversed and argues for a central role for libraries in a developing information society.

The chairman of the commission and of the report working group, Matthew Evans, said: "A UK-wide information network made available through libraries could do more to encourage the spread of information, knowledge and communication technology skills among the population than any other measure the Government could introduce."

As well as calling for investment in new technology, the report supports the establishment of a permanent government body to oversee the development of libraries. The body would guide the integration of libraries within a network of new technology that would eventually see libraries connected to schools, museums and universities via the Internet.

The bulk of the £770 million cost would go towards the development of what is termed in the report "network infrastructure". Spread over seven years, this would include £192 million for the purchase of computer hardware, such as terminals and printers.

The cost of setting up a public library network is estimated at £172 million, while a further £228 million would be needed to set up or upgrade local IT networks.

The cost, says the report, should be met by a combination of central and local government finance, National Lottery funds and the private sector. Although the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, would not say how much the Government would commit, he indicated that the project had cross-departmental backing within government as well as the support of the Prime Minister.

He described the report as "a defining moment for Britain's library services" and "a cut above the usual report issued by the public sector".

"The Government's vision is of an integrated grid linking libraries and schools, a vision made possible by technological change. Libraries are the colleges for ordinary people, the key to ensuring that we do not divide into a society of computer haves, and computer have-nots."

Explaining the genesis of the report, Mr Evans said: "I kept going on at the previous government that we must reinvent the public library, or it is going to die. It seemed that new technology was the way to do it."

Despite the report's emphasis on the role of new technology, market research carried out for the report suggests that users are more interested in the more old-fashioned aspects of the library service such as book supply, opening hours and charges.

"There is resistance to new technology, but the new technology is already there and is quite boring in itself. What is important is what is done with it. The group's view is that access should be free," it says.

Poet brought to book over throwaway lines

TED HUGHES thought he had done his duty, *writes Dan Glaister.* The Poet Laureate had been charged with writing a defence of the public library, a call to arms for the public sector's borrowing requirement. His verses would be a stirring defence of the book, a fitting preface for a report into the future of libraries published last week by the Library and Information Commission *(see above)*.

Mr Hughes, who last put pen to paper in public with a heartfelt tribute to Diana, Princess of Wales, started strongly:

Fourteen centuries have learned,
From charred remains, that what took place
When Alexandria's library burned
-Brain-damaged the human race.

His poem, Hear It Again, takes the reader on a journey through the great crimes against literature. Book burning by Hitler, Stalin rounding up the bards . . . no crime against literature is spared Mr Hughes's wrath.

But it was when he brought his litany of injustices up to the present — and even dared to glimpse the future — that Mr Hughes ran into problems.

"I had to send it back to him for some changes," said Matthew Evans, chairman of the Library and Information Commission and of Mr Hughes's publisher, Faber & Faber.

The Poet Laureate, it seemed, had not quite understood his commission. His verses had strayed off message. "One of the verses was an attack on new technology," explained Mr Evans. "I said to Ted, this looks a bit worrying."

It was more than worrying. The centrepiece of the commission's report is a call for the introduction of new technology to place libraries at the heart of the "information society".

A chastened Mr Hughes duly rewrote the offending verse:

And in my own day in my own land
I have heard the fiery whisper: "We are here
To destroy the Book
To destroy the rooted stock of the Book and
The Book's perennial vintage"

The amended version was received with much relief at the offices of the commission and given pride of place at the front of the report.

Mr Evans was unable to locate the poet laureate's offending verse. "I think we just threw it away," he said.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
October 26 1997

Poor will pay price of legal aid cut

Clare Dyer and Michael White

THE Government last week took a sharp axe to one of the main planks of the welfare state when it announced a virtual dismantling of the civil legal aid scheme set up in 1950 as a means of providing access to justice for all regardless of income.

The Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, revealed sweeping proposals for cuts in legal aid for the poor, aimed at saving at least £300 million a year and curbing excessive legal fees.

An American-style "no win, no fee" system will replace legal aid in nearly one million cases a year, with lawyers sharing the risk with clients, who will be expected to insure against the cost of defeat.

The plans were condemned by lawyers and Opposition spokesmen. The former Tory attorney general Sir Nicholas Lyell said: "The idea of substituting no win, no fee for legal aid rights for the poorest section of society is really not satisfactory."

The Liberal Democrat legal affairs spokesman, John Burnett called it a "blunt knife" which would be "bad news for anyone with a borderline case".

But Downing Street signalled that the reforms had the Prime Ministers full support. It put the Lord Chancellor at the forefront of New Labour's "hard choice" pledges to overhaul all aspects of the welfare state created by the reforming Attlee governments of 1945-51, Tony Blair's aides stressed.

"The legal system must develop or decay," Lord Irvine told a legal audience at the Law Society's conference in Cardiff, before invoking the Blairite principle that rights must be matched with responsibilities. High-risk cases will be discouraged.

"Legal aid must be re-focused," Lord Irvine said. "The future lies in contracting for services, in both criminal and civil cases."

The shake-up goes beyond anything ever mooted by successive Tory governments — and heavily criticised by Labour — as they grappled with an escalating budget in a service without cash limits.

But ministers say they are implementing the "access to justice" recommendations of the Woolf report to make justice quicker, cheaper, simpler, faster and fairer.

"No government can tolerate an ever-growing demand-led budget that just cannot be controlled," Lord Irvine warned.

Lord Irvine's package will cut an estimated £300 million from the £800 million civil legal aid budget — part of a total legal aid bill which has risen 115 per cent since 1991, despite a 9 per cent fall in the number of people helped since 1993. Legal aid, for which more than 40 per cent of the population qualifies, is to be withdrawn from all civil claims for damages or money, including for accident victims.

Aid will still be available for criminal cases, divorce and family law, for housing, immigration and social welfare cases, and for proceedings such as judicial review where money is not the remedy sought. Currently, 932,000 civil cases a year fall into categories largely hit by the new rules. But where aid is retained, the Government is proposing that cases should qualify only if the chances of success are put above 75 per cent. At present, aid is granted if a case is thought to have a reasonable chance, usually over 50 per cent.

Phillip Sycamore, president of the Law Society, said: "This is a massive cut in access to justice for a large section of society . . . What we're seeing is a considerable curtailment of the rights of many people in society, a lot of them poor people and very vulnerable people."

Trident missile order muddies nuclear policy

David Fairhall and Ewen MacAskill

THE Government's nuclear deterrent strategy seemed deep in confusion last week as ministers defended the purchase of more Trident submarine missiles while suggesting that a second order may be cancelled as part of the defence review.

The £90 million order for seven American-made nuclear missiles was described by the Defence Secretary, George Robertson, as "quite a routine" announcement — a previously planned purchase that had no implications for future policy.

It was welcomed as such by the shadow defence secretary, Sir George Young. The Conservatives had intended to buy the missiles.

But the Government's announcement — in a written parliamentary answer from the defence procurement minister, Lord Gilbert — added that "future missile and warhead requirements remain under consideration in the strategic defence review". This is consistent with Labour's promise to reduce the power of the Trident force to no more than the Polaris system it replaced, though that promise has usually been made in terms of warhead numbers, not missiles.

"We want a minimum deterrent," Mr Robertson said. "That was a promise we were elected on. We will look at the issue of how it is deployed as part of the defence review."

The decision to buy the latest batch of seven was nevertheless seen by Labour's anti-nuclear lobby as a betrayal of earlier promises and condemned by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament as a waste of money.

In June, junior defence minister John Spellar implied in a parliamentary answer that both remaining batches of missiles might be cancelled. The requirement for 65 would be "tested during the strategic defence review before final decisions are made".

Defence sources reinforced Mr Robertson's account. This month's order went ahead, they suggested, because until the outcome of the defence review was known — around the end of the year — the Trident procurement programme would grind on as planned.

Quangos told to end secrecy

David Hencke

MORE than 1,000 public organisations responsible for spending in excess of £18 billion of taxpayers' money every year are to be ordered to open up their files in the first move to implement the Government's freedom of information initiative promised in Labour's manifesto.

David Clark, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, has circulated a confidential plan to end the "unaccountable, secret and unresponsive world of the quango state" to cabinet colleagues. If approved, a consultation paper proposing substantial changes to the quango system will be published next month and the first changes implemented next year. The success of the plan is being seen in Whitehall as a litmus test for how far cabinet ministers accept Tony Blair's pledge that they must be radical in reforming government.

The move comes as the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, draws up plans to abolish and merge numerous quangos as part of the spending review, and as the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, plans to force health trusts, authorities and boards to open their proceedings to the public.

The Cabinet Office paper discloses that 309 executive quangos, 674 advisory bodies, 75 tribunals and 136 Boards of Visitors to penal establishments will have to meet in public.

The most radical section of the paper says the Government wants quangos to disclose all the minutes of their meetings and be required to release other records — unless national security is at risk. Before the new act, ministers are being asked to begin publishing reports that the previous government kept confidential.

The proposals should force a flood of new information on previously confidential advice to ministers on pollution, the environment, medical and scientific matters and provide an insight to priorities within government bodies and previously confidential commercial decisions.

In Brief

MICHAEL JOHN STONE, a 37-year-old unemployed man, has been charged with the murder of Lin Russell and her six-year-old daughter, Megan, in a Kent country lane in July last year. He is also charged with the attempted murder of 10-year-old Josie Russell, who survived the attack.

A 39-YEAR-OLD man held in custody in Manchester on suspicion of the murder of Pascale Longesserre, aged 38, and her two children in Angers, France last month, is wanted in three countries in connection with several other unsolved murders, including the killings of Caroline Dickinson, aged 13, in Pleine Fourgères in Brittany, and French film producer Sophie Toscan du Plantier in County Cork, Ireland.

TWO out of every three HIV patients in Britain are missing out on the most effective drugs, according to a nine-country survey.

THE Home Secretary, Jack Straw, backed the continued use by the police of CS gas sprays, which he said did not appear to represent a "significant threat" to human health.

RICHARD BRANSON would stand the best chance of being the first directly elected mayor of London if he chose to stand, an ICM poll indicated. In second and third place were Ken Livingstone and Lord Archer.

THE death of Diana, Princess of Wales, led to a significant drop in reported crime in the week between August 31 and September 6 — the day of Diana's funeral — according to figures released by West Yorkshire and Cumbria police forces.

DRINK rather than drugs is driving the continuing rise — an 8 per cent increase in the past year — in violent crime, the Home Office said. However, the total number of offences of all crime reported in the past year fell by 6 per cent compared with the previous year.

TONY BARRELL, the head of the inquiry into the west London train crash last month in which seven people died, has resigned because of a perceived conflict of interest.

THRUST SSC, the jet car driven by RAF pilot Andy Green, succeeded in taking the official land-speed record beyond the speed of sound when it clocked an average of 759.333mph in two runs across the Nevada desert within a one-hour period.

ROBERT MAWSON, a literary unknown, became an instant millionaire after two days of feverish bidding for his novel, The Lazarus Child, at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

Ban on public smoking urged

Clare Longrigg

SMOKERS should be banned from lighting up in public places because of the risk to the health of others, medical experts said last week, following new evidence of the dangers of passive smoking.

Lawyers also warned of a rash of actions by employees against companies which permit smoking in workplaces. The rights of non-smokers outweighed the rights of smokers, said one employment rights specialist.

Passive smoking causes 600 cases of lung cancer a year, and up to 13,000 cases of heart disease, the anti-smoking group Action on Smoking and Health claims. It estimates that, in total, passive smoking may cause up to 2 million cases of ill health a year.

Two new reports claim non-smokers exposed to passive smoking have a 23 per cent greater risk of developing heart disease and 26 per cent greater risk of lung cancer. The research on heart disease shows that even a small amount of cigarette smoke can pose a serious risk.

The studies, carried out in London, coincide with similar findings from California, which also say, for the first time, that passive smoking can be a direct cause of asthma in children rather than simply exacerbating the illness in those who already have it.

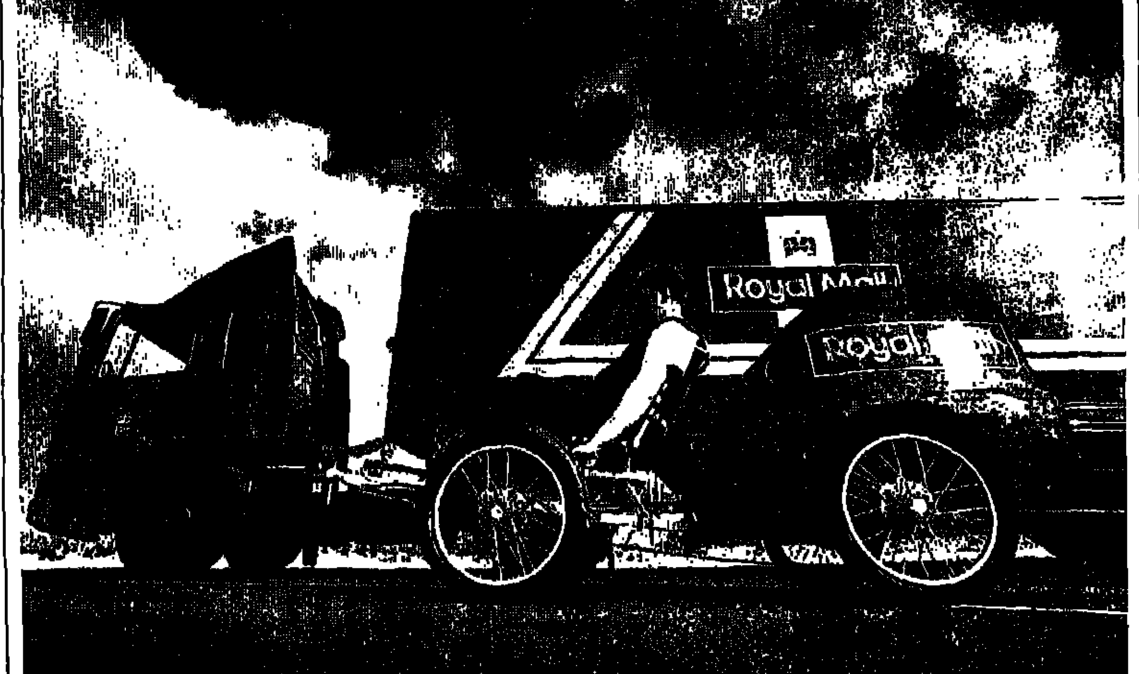
The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) said it would be looking again at its guidelines on smoking in the light of the latest evidence, and may issue fresh advice to companies. At present, the HSE says that smokers should be segregated from non-smokers, and that non-smoking should be regarded as the norm in enclosed workplaces. But some legal experts claim that employers could be liable for negligence if office workers are exposed to smoking.

The British Medical Association has also renewed its call for a ban on smoking in public places in the wake of the new evidence. Employment law specialists said non-smokers had increasing rights which were leading to claims for constructive dismissal as well as for compensation.

Mary Stacey, an employment rights specialist at Thompson's law firm, said: "The rights of non-smokers are on the increase. People who don't smoke can expect to work in smoke-free environments. It is not correct to say that the rights of smokers are equal to the rights of non-smokers."

Shona Newmark, an employment law partner at Baker and McKenzie, said staff in pubs and restaurants might have to sign waivers, or take medical checks, in the light of the new evidence.

Comment, page 14



Snail-mail . . . The Royal Mail has selected the Dorset town of Ferndown to test its prototype recumbent cycle, which can carry up to a quarter-tonne of letters PHOTOGRAPH: ROGER BAMBER

Unionists walk out after rows with Irish

John Mullin

ULSTER Unionists on Monday walked out of the multi-party negotiations at Stormont as splits re-opened with the Irish government over its territorial claim to Northern Ireland.

The move came amid a deepening row over the alleged Sinn Fein leanings of Mary McAleese, the Irish government's candidate in this month's presidential election.

Unionists have long claimed that she was a Sinn Fein sympathiser. They pointed as proof to a weekend leak of an Irish government document which indicated the nationalist SDLP thought so too. The Alliance Party said Ms McAleese should pull out of the race. She rejected that call.

David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists, and his negotiating team left Castle Buildings as discussions began on strand two of the talks on Northern Ireland's future which deals with relations between Northern Ireland and the republic.

The row is over articles two and three of the republic's constitution, which lay claim to the six counties of the Northern Ireland. Unionists want the Irish government to relinquish them now. They said Dublin was refusing to discuss the issue ahead of a negotiated settlement.

Their withdrawal was only from strand two. It looked to be a temporary move, as the new Irish foreign affairs ministers, David Andrews, appeared to be shifting his ground and recognising that articles two and three had to be part of negotiations.

Lord Alderice, leader of the Alliance Party, regarded as the most moderate party in Northern Ireland, said that the row over Ms McAleese was creating "diversion, turmoil and furore" at Stormont.

Ms McAleese, the front runner in the race to replace Mary Robinson, was said in an Irish government memo leaked two days ago to have been "pushing a Sinn Fein agenda". The comments were attributed to Brid Rodgers, a leading SDLP figure, which increased their impact.

Ms McAleese, who is being backed by the Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, said her role in the peace process grew out of her strong Christian commitment. She was an SDLP supporter, she said.

Minister pledges cervical smear test reforms

Sarah Boseley

A DAMNING report into years of cervical cancer screening blunders that left at least five women dead and many more severely damaged called this week for reforms to the entire British testing programme.

Sir William Wells, chairman of the South Thames regional office of the NHS Executive, who headed the government-appointed inquiry into failures within the Kent and Canterbury NHS Trust, said his report "details an appalling series of events which should never have been allowed to happen". He apologised on behalf of the health service to women affected and their families.

Health minister Baroness Jay accepted all the recommendations in principle and pledged to restore confidence in smear tests. "I have enormous sympathy for the women of east Kent who were so badly let down by these errors, and for their families and friends," she said.

"I am dismayed by the litany of management weaknesses, unheeded warnings and poor quality control systems detailed in this report. The failures . . . were completely unacceptable."

In February 1996, the trust admitted wide-scale misreporting of the slides submitted to its laboratories for testing. A review of 91,000 slides was announced. An internal inquiry was dismissed as a whitewash. This week Sir William accused the trust of being "economical with the truth".

World youth in rush to learn English

John Ezard

A GLOBAL "rush to English" as the language of youth culture will speed up drastically in the next 50 years, a British Council report says this week.

By 2050, the number of 15- to 24-year-olds speaking English as a first language is forecast to rise by 30 per cent, with the numbers of Chinese, Russian, French and German speakers falling.

The report aims to launch a worldwide debate on language patterns and teaching. It predicts that on present trends this age group will have 65 million English speakers, compared with 51 million now.

China's vast population will still leave Chinese on top of the global league table — but with a drop from 201 million to 166 million in the number of young people using it as a first language.

Young Russian speakers will fall from 22.5 million to 14 million by 2050. French will decline slightly to 9 million, while German will lose a quarter of its present 12 million speakers aged 15 to 24.

Some of the steepest increases will be in Hindi/Urdu and Arabic because of population growth. The number of young Arabic speakers will almost double, from 39 million to 72 million.

The report forecasts that by 2050 English will be in fourth place behind Chinese, Hindi/Urdu and Arabic — but closing the gap rapidly.

But the British Council warns that the spread of English may be reversed by political and cultural fashion. The world "may turn against the English language, associating it with industrialisation, destruction of cultures, infringement of basic human rights, global cultural imperialism and growing social equality.

"The spread of English might become regarded in a similar way as exploitative logging in rain forests. It may be seen as providing a short term economic gain for a few — but involving the destruction of the ecologies which lesser-used languages inhabit."

A Guide for Forecasting the Popularity of the English Language in the 21st Century; British Council, 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BN

Youth crime cut by victim contact

Stuart Miller

A SCHEME which borrows Maori concepts of justice to bring young offenders face to face with their victims was hailed as a possible solution to the problem of youth crime, after evidence suggested it drastically cut rates of reoffending.

Thames Valley police, who have been running a pilot of the Restorative Justice scheme, in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, claimed last week they had lowered the numbers of young people reoffending from 30 per cent to 4 per cent.

The figures have startled senior officers as well as groups dealing with young offenders. National figures suggest that a third of youngsters will reoffend after receiving a caution for their first offence.

Charles Pollard, Thames Valley chief constable, said: "I was very surprised . . . I tend to be a bit cynical. I would be happy with a 10 or 15 per cent reduction but this is a big impact. We feel we need a system which isn't just about blaming people, but actually holds them to account. I think the court system does not achieve this. How do you expect people to change their behaviour if the system doesn't make them realise what damage they're doing?"

The success of the programme, which will now be extended throughout the Thames Valley force, prompted renewed calls for the Home Office to consider adopting it nationwide.

The results come only two days after Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, announced a sweeping rethink of the juvenile criminal justice system (*see story, right*).

Critics voiced a note of caution, warning that the success could be exaggerated because the scheme had only involved offenders who agreed to participate.

The pilot has dealt with almost 400 young offenders aged 10-17 since its launch in April 1995. Only those facing a caution are able to take part, and those who refuse face having their cases referred to the courts. The participation of victims is entirely voluntary.

While the system of confronting offenders with their victims is not new and is used by several forces across the country, the Aylesbury results have provided the most striking evidence of its potential impact.

The scheme was inspired by Maori tribal laws, which force criminals to confront their victims. This proved so successful that it was adopted by mainstream New Zealand law in 1995, and exported to Australia after two officers from New South Wales witnessed it in action.

Thames Valley police consulted officers in New Zealand and Australia, where the original idea was piloted. In New South Wales, there has been a 50 per cent reduction in the number of juvenile offenders in court, and a 40 per cent reduction in reoffending.

Bob Gregory, an officer who specially trained for the scheme, said: "It works because it criticises the behaviour of the offender. Going to court is obviously a difficult thing, but everything tends to wash over the offender and they don't have to face the reality of what they have done."

PHOTO: JOANNE O'BRIEN

Straw calls for 'lists of shame'

Alan Travis

FINES on the police and solicitors and "shame lists" of poorly-performing youth courts are to be used to deliver a Labour election pledge to halve the time it takes to get persistent teenage offenders into court.

Magistrates are also to be given the direct power to remand "spree offenders" as young as 12 in secure units while they await trial.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said last week the measures were needed to end the "adjournment culture" in the youth court system, which meant it took an average of 4½ months to sentence an offender. Some are not dealt with until 18 months after their original crime.

"Such delays are unacceptable. They frustrate and distress victims, increase costs, and certainly do not help the offender, as the link between crime and punishment is broken. All too often young offenders are allowed to offend time and time again while waiting to face justice," Mr Straw said.

Mr Straw said some of the 170 secure places recently provided for local authorities are to be used for persistent offenders aged 12-14 awaiting trial. The extra places were ordered to redeem a long-standing government aim to end the detention of 15- and 16-year-olds in adult jails.

Mr Straw said that only the vulnerable among 15-and 16-year-olds currently in prison would be granted these places, and it was hoped the remainder of 15-and 16-year-olds could in the longer term be transferred to Young Offender Institutions with specially designed regimes.

The under-15s who may be locked up under this power are "spree offenders" and the "hardcore of persistent offenders", defined as those already convicted by the courts on three separate occasions and arrested again within three years.

At present only social services directors have the direct power to lock up under-15s in secure units. Mr Straw said he wanted to end the "shuttlecock" between the courts and councils with both trying to evade their responsibility.

The detail of the Government's attempt to cut through the delays in the £1 billion-a-year youth justice system rely strongly on the introduction of statutory time limits to run from arrest to first court listing and from conviction to sentence.

The police, probation officers, lawyers and others involved will face financial penalties if they fail to complete a specified task within the deadline.

Fear of tuition fees blamed for Oxbridge applicants shortfall

Rebecca Smithers and John Carvel

THE first sign that the threat of £1,000 tuition fees will deter students from going to university came last week with evidence of a big slump in numbers applying before the cut-off date for entry next year to Oxford and Cambridge.

The disclosure seriously undermines the insistence by ministers that the threat of fees and the phasing out of the maintenance grant next year will not reduce the number of applicants for higher education.

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service said that it had received just 39,369 applications before the Oxbridge deadline — representing an unprecedented 12 per cent fall on last year's level of 44,200.

The Ucas chief executive, Tony Higgins, warned that if the same pattern continued until the December 15 deadline for applications to all universities, there could be as many as 80,000 fewer applicants for the 1998/99 academic year.

Douglas Trainer, president of the National Union of Students, said the slump in early applications showed the Government's proposals were having a huge deterrent effect:

"This should ring alarm bells throughout higher education, particularly in the new universities. We will be writing immediately to Labour MPs asking them to reconsider their support for a scheme which has clearly not been thought through," he said.

A spokeswoman for the Department for Education and Employment said: "It is too early to read anything into these figures, but we will be monitoring the situation very closely".

The Education and Employment Secretary, David Blunkett, told vice-chancellors last week that the Government would monitor the policy on fees to see if they had a deterrent effect.

"We need to know whether it is poor aspirations or fear of debt which . . . deters people from the lower socio-economic classes from applying to university," he said.

But worried vice-chancellors said the downturn — in sharp contrast to the slight annual increase over the past five years — was significant because it showed that pupils from well-heeled, public school backgrounds had chosen not to apply to university because of the "confusion" about the new fees and phasing out of maintenance grants.

The vice-chancellor of North London University, Brian Roper, had originally predicted that between 40,000 and 50,000 students would be deterred in the first year, but last week revised this figure to 80,000 as a result of the new information.

"I deeply regret that this should have happened. The figures send out a very worrying message," he said.

"[Oxbridge applicants are] the group that should be least affected by the fees. A stream of totally baffling information from the Government has clearly added to the confusion and volatility of the situation".

● Cambridge university is considering an advertising campaign to attract more pupils from state schools. Admissions tutors hope to raise the state school intake from 50 to 65 per cent to achieve a fairer reflection of the proportion getting top marks at A levels. The move comes in response to a threat from ministers to withdraw extra funding for the Oxbridge tutorial system.

Arms trade needs curbing

THE ARMS trade is not only a moral question for Britain but one that poses strategic danger for the world. Our attention is focused on the issue once again by the Military Balance report that the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) produces annually. After shaking our heads over the figures — $40 billion worth of arms sales worldwide in 1996 — we must not simply shelve the problem for another year. There has been a huge decline in real terms since the end of the cold war. But the upward trend established in 1995 (13 per cent over the previous year) now seems well set, with a further 8 per cent increase in 1996.

After the cold war, arms races were supposed to have ended along with ideology: neither proposition has been borne out since then. It is a particular irony that Asia, scene of the famous "economic miracle", now achieves distinction in the arms field. There appears to be no sound defence reason for the new build-up. China, as the IISS notes, continues to give priority to improving its strategic forces as a credible deterrent and to boosting its conventional forces to deal with border threats and internal security. It does not assign priority to projecting a major conventional force outside its territory. Perhaps China's neighbours are worried by the assertive language of Beijing's chauvinism and the lack of political change. But the chief lesson of East Asia seems to be that economic plenty encourages rather than dissuades defence spending. So much so that the IISS suggests the upward trend in Asia will continue unless there is an economic recession.

Arms purchases in the Middle East, though only half of those a decade ago, are still obscenely high — more than $15 billion last year or 40 per cent of the global arms trade. To no one's surprise Saudi Arabia has the king's share, expending one-eighth of its gross domestic product on arms — the highest proportion in the world — and taking more than half of the region's imports. British arms sales in turn benefit hugely from the Saudi factor: this above all is where our consciences should twinge. What good purpose is served by feeding the appetite of a corrupt and autocratic regime that holds back regional reform and may one day implode as disastrously as the Shah's Iran?

A less quantifiable worry is presented in eastern Europe, where Nato's much-trumpeted "enlargement" comes with a price tag of unknown dimensions. The IISS says that the alliance's confidence in being able to meet its existing members' share of modernisation is not well-founded. And the new members are almost certain to have to incur higher defence expenditure that they can ill afford.

The Gulf war served a grim reminder of the danger of indiscriminate arms sales, but the countermeasures taken since then have been puny. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms should be expanded to include figures for national production and to provide some form of international scrutiny. The European Union should adopt a code of conduct that prohibits one member taking up arms deals forgone by another. Above all, we need to grasp that the economic benefits of the arms trade are exaggerated, and that short-term gain can lead to long-term insecurity.

Killing suburbs of Algiers

LAST WEEKEND was a normal one in Algeria. Suspected Muslim militants killed 21 people across the country, according to Britain's national newspapers. The security forces said that they had killed 12 militants in an ambush and conducted search operations in half a dozen suburbs of Algiers. The difference with previous weekends is simply that these routine events are attracting more attention. The Algerian government has departed from its usual policy of discouraging foreign reporters to invite coverage of the municipal elections which will be held this week. And to bolster the image of a regime fighting against crazed terrorism, it has actually facilitated inquiry into some of the most recent massacres in or near Algiers.

Reports such as the one carried on the front page this week not only paint a horrific picture of the violence inflicted upon helpless civilians. They also contribute important direct evidence from skilled observers. As our correspondent David Hirst put it, it prompts the same "sinister question" that Algerians have been asking themselves for years: just who is behind these atrocities?

What happened in the suburb of Bentalha on September 23 when some 300 people were killed remains mysterious, but the evidence indicates substantial loose ends in the official version. This is that the killings were carried out by extremist militants whose identity — as in other cases — cannot be fixed more precisely. In the case at least of Bentalha, local survivors do not appear to doubt that those who entered their community to kill and dismember were indeed militants who emerged by night from the bordering Mitidja Plain. But the question underlined by their account is why the Algerian security forces — with a garrison less than 2km away — remained strangely passive while the killers rampaged through the night. Was the army simply at a loss on how to deal with unconventional warfare when they deployed heavy armour to observe what was happening but failed to send in troops? Or does this willingness to tolerate a massacre almost under their noses suggest a political agenda in which the excesses of extremism strengthen the hand of military hardliners? Certainly this is not the first time that the army has stood by. Monday's Washington Post reported that the Sidi Rais massacre on August 29 took place within a few hundred metres of an army garrison which was visible from the scene.

For the time being, the outside world can only register its bafflement at these murky events, but the Algiers government must also register that they have aroused deep disquiet. The municipal elections are supposed to be a step towards restructuring the country's political institutions from which Muslim fundamentalism was excluded five years ago. If there is any chance at all of this process being viewed in a positive light, then the "sinister questions" have to be answered.

Poison in the workplace

PEOPLE who have to endure passive smoking still often feel — or are made to feel — that they are infringing civil liberties if they protest too loudly. To wave the smoke away, cough or move one's seat may be regarded as niggling or ostentatious. But the mountain of new research that links passive smoking with chronic ill-health, for adults as well as children, can no longer be brushed aside.

A summary of the evidence in the British Medical Journal shows that similar conclusions have been reached in four separate studies. They indicate that the risk of lung cancer or heart disease for adults subject to passive smoking is roughly 25 per cent higher. Babies run a far higher additional risk of acute chest diseases if one or both of their parents smoke. These findings should be set against the background of what has already been established in the United States where the alert was sounded much earlier and more effectively. Passive smoking has been recognised there as a health hazard since 1988 and "environmental" tobacco smoke is already classified as a Class A carcinogen in the same category as asbestos and radon gas.

The response of those who speak for the tobacco industry has been to fire a broadside of contradictory arguments. At one moment doubt is thrown — though without going into specifics — on the quality of the research. Then the argument quickly shifts ground. It is conceded that passive smoking is irritating and even undesirable for the victim's health. But the industry complains that most of the research has been done in family situations rather than in the workplace, and that it concentrates either on the old or the young. Finally the apologists fall back on the ultimate excuse: yes, it may be true that tobacco, or tobacco smoke, has the harmful effects which the research has documented, but no one can say exactly which of the dozens of chemical substances contained in the product is responsible for causing the damage. Until then the industry will just shrug its shoulders,

The duty of care imposed upon employers and public authorities is underlined by the new research. Britain's Health and Safety Executive, which said last week that it would look again at the guidelines issued to companies, should give unequivocal advice to ban all smoking at the workplace. We now know beyond any wisp of doubt that one person's smoke is, quite literally, another person's poison.

Queen turns pawn in India power play

Martin Woollacott

WHEN Clement Attlee approached King George VI with the news that Mountbatten had failed to persuade the Indians to maintain their link with the British crown, the prime minister thought the monarch might be difficult to convince. Victoria, who had assumed the title of Empress of India in 1876, would not have given it up without a struggle, Attlee thought, but the King accepted its loss "without a murmur".

Yet it is not so easy to disentangle what history put together as either Attlee or the King thought. Britain and India still look at one another in ways coloured by the past, and monarchy and empire are still tied in the minds of both countries. Objectively, last week's royal tour was a carefully planned and generally well managed affair that has achieved useful objectives, and its difficulties have perhaps been exaggerated by an Indian and British press too much on the lookout for trouble.

Yet Indians themselves have been surprised by what the Asian Age newspaper calls the "somewhat anti-British, or rather anti-Raj, feeling that seems to be part of the atmosphere of the independence anniversary celebrations". It would be wrong to attribute that atmosphere to specific mistakes made by the Palace, the Foreign Office, or the Indian government, although there undoubtedly have been some errors. Rather, the tour seems to have been drawn into the subterranean argument over India's future and to have become a factor in the manoeuvrings of politicians, including the prime minister, Inder Kumar Gujral.

When the Queen visited a British Council reception last week, none heeded the advice that men should bow and women curtsy when the royal couple entered. The problem here is not rudeness, although there has been some, but that India's British past is part of the argument about what India is going to become. Gujral is in government, for instance, with coalition partners who want to drop the English language. He is the leader of a country where the privileges of the old Anglophile élite, of which he is a member, are under pressure, along with many other aspects, constitutional, political, and cultural, of the old way of doing things in India.

Some members of that élite are involved in the attack on it, partly to pre-empt their rivals and partly because they genuinely want to be involved in the attempt to create something new. It might be said that what is in contention is not the British Raj, but the Indian Raj that succeeded it. The symbols of the one, however, serve the purpose of questioning the other. Thus a royal visit planned to avoid irritating Indian sensitivities inevitably does so, because it has its uses in the important if confused struggle over old and new in India.

That struggle is partly over how central government in India will work in future, and this factor, too, has affected the anniversary tour. Much power has already slipped away to the states, to the point where it is becoming difficult to see how national political leaders will create and maintain nationwide constituencies. Gujral's insecure government, which could face an election at any moment, is an example of this weakness at the centre. One way to counter it is nationalistic assertiveness. Gujral seems to have chosen this path. He is a diplomat and foreign policy expert, so when he uses, or permits government spokesmen to use, undiplomatic language, it must be a matter of deliberate choice.

Objections and complaints about the tour show Gujral's government refusing to be dictated to by the old masters. The same attitude was obvious when Gujral, during his recent trip to the United States, let it be known that he thought President Clinton should come to New York to see him rather than that he should go to Washington to see President Clinton. Such dramas, he may hope, will go down well in north India and might even help him begin to gain the mass base he so obviously lacks.

The problems over Kashmir during the tour arose in part because of the importance of foreign policy for an Indian leader and government who have little room for manoeuvre in domestic matters. As foreign minister, Gujral set up the most successful discussions between India and Pakistan for years. The recent Kashmir artillery exchanges only underline the absurdity of this costly on-off war. This is an absurdity finally beginning to be recognised in India, so it is possible that Gujral may be able to sustain the improvement in relations between the two countries, and that they could begin gingerly to approach the Kashmir problem itself.

BUT national assertion comes in here again, for there can be no suspicion that India, in its relations with Pakistan, is doing anything under pressure from third parties. This is why the offer by the UK Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, of good offices was perhaps unwise, and why the US deputy secretary of state, Thomas Pickering, who began a tour of the sub-continent last week, with discussion of Kashmir an announced objective, may well receive an equally dusty response.

In the interplay between today's India, today's Britain and a past that both sides are capable of using in inaccurate and irresponsible ways, Amritsar has a special place. From the British point of view it was an untypical act, not at all representative of the way the British ruled India. So there is a sense in which an apology for Amritsar might be seen as admitting to what is not true, that India was kept down by the constant use of military force. On the other hand, as the Indian writer Nirad C Chaudhuri has put it, it was not Amritsar that was the disgrace but what followed, with General Dyer gathering "honours" from many quarters. It was perhaps a mistake, therefore, to bring the Queen to Amritsar and then have her say little.

The tour has not been a disaster, but it has pointed up certain weaknesses in both countries. Britain has not thought much about the subcontinent in recent years. Europe and the US have been its consuming interests. Both India and Britain are changing in ways which Indians and Britons themselves may not fully understand. So we should not be surprised, nor particularly dismayed, if a royal tour brings the British connection into India's internal debates.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
October 26 1997

The planet is facing its hottest problem yet

Can a deal be stitched up in time to save the Kyoto Climate Convention? Fred Pearce reports

NEGOTIATIONS aimed at heading off a global climatic breakdown in the coming century are close to collapse, with the United States and developing countries at loggerheads. But when talks resume this week in Bonn, European negotiators will have a draft compromise in their pockets. Can they sell it to the warring factions?

Bonn is the last formal negotiating session before the Climate Convention in Kyoto in December, when targets to cut emissions of greenhouse gases for the next 20 years are set to be agreed. Many scientists say this is the world's last chance to act before these gases damage the climate beyond repair.

Two years ago, the world's governments, including the US, agreed the need for such cuts and the principle that the biggest emitters, the industrialised nations, had the prime responsibility to act.

But since then, isolationism has taken hold in the US, the world's largest source of greenhouse gases. The US Congress will not agree to controls on industry that are not matched by its industrial competitors in Asia, particularly China. No matter that the US currently emits eight times more carbon dioxide per head of population than China.

Hardly surprisingly, the G77 group, representing the majority of developing nations, says the industrialised countries that got us into this mess should take the lead in cutting emissions.

The poor world's case is obvious. But the US has a point. The reality is that rich nations have used up most of the "ecological space" available for polluting the atmosphere. And latecomers to the industrial party cannot avoid that fact. So something has to give.

The European Union is taking the moral high ground. With its per capita emissions only half those of the US, it is none the less offering to cut them by 15 per cent by 2010, if other industrialised nations do likewise. Unfortunately, they won't. Japan is proposing a 5 per cent cut. US negotiators, while not revealing their hand, suggest even that would not get through Congress without commitments from developing countries. So what next?

European negotiators think they can see a way forward. "We don't agree with Clinton that we should set targets for developing countries in Kyoto," says one national negotiator. "But we do agree that this process can only work if we move towards a global effort."

They have in mind a declaration, called perhaps the Kyoto Mandate, that would give both sides their way. Developing countries would agree in principle that beyond 2010 they will have to accept targets. In return, the US administration would agree to a legally binding target for emissions cuts now.

The developing nations would need plenty of coaxing. The deal would commit them to industrialising their economies without the pollution "rights" enjoyed by the developed world. Somebody would have to foot the bill.

Bob Watson, environment director at the World Bank, says that such a deal will require "the transfer of tens of billions of dollars" into the economies of developing countries to allow them to buy expensive greenhouse-friendly technologies.

It sounds improbable. But here perhaps is some bait to catch anxious American industrialists. They have the technologies. They could make a fast buck along the way.

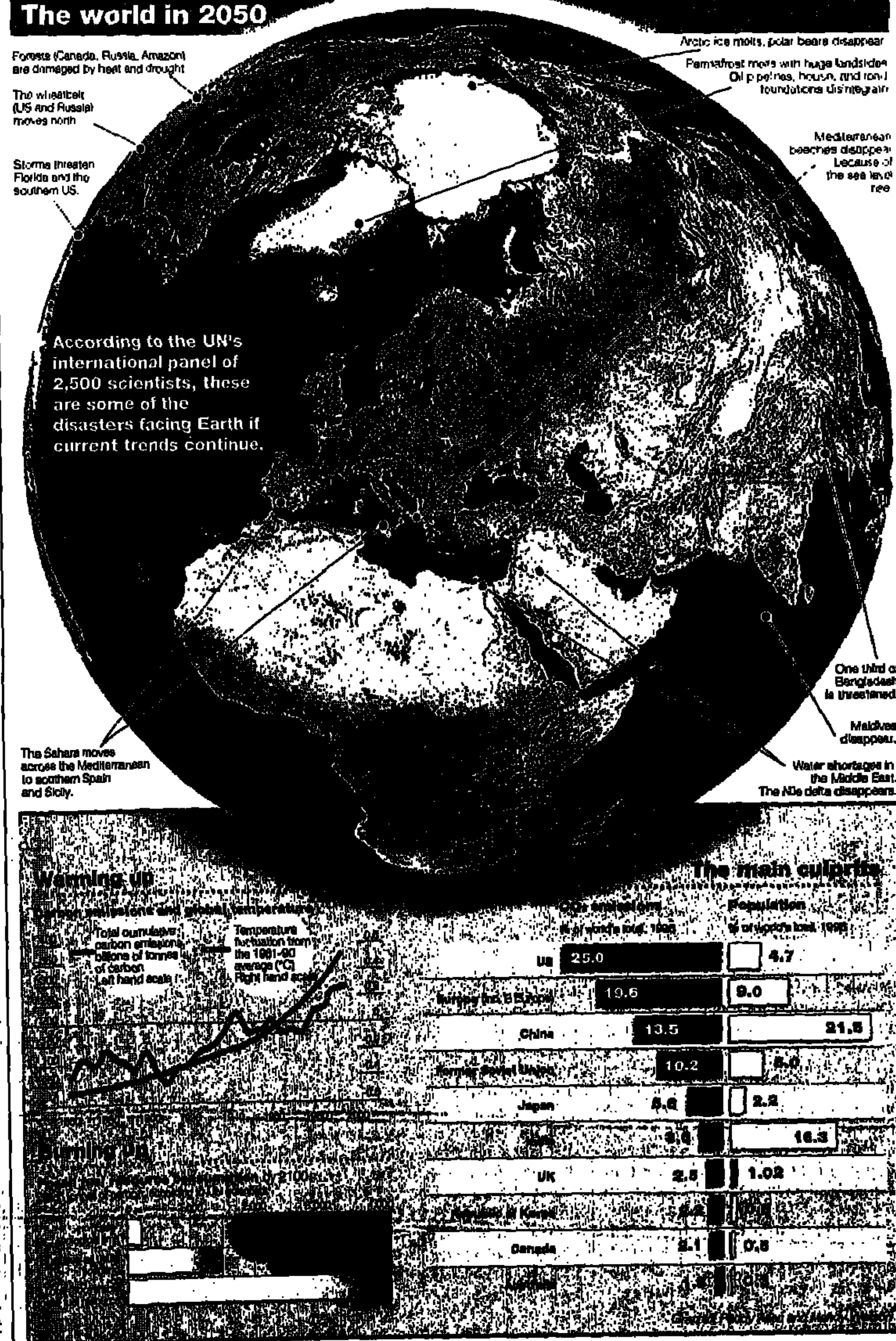
This is what lies behind the US's key demand at Kyoto. More important even than any targets set in December, it says, is the principle of "flexibility" in the way countries meet their targets. They want US companies to be able to tap Watson's "billions of dollars" to sell clean technologies to other countries — and then to count the reductions in emissions they make as a credit against the US's target.

Developing countries are split here. Some see a chance to lay their hands on new technologies. Others see the US wriggling out of its obligation to cut emissions at home.

The Europeans have decided to go along with flexibility. But they are deeply suspicious about US motives. In particular, Europe fears the wholesale buying and selling of national pollution permits. Some countries will have pollution targets well above what they actually emit, because of the collapse of heavy industry since 1990.

The fear is that the US will try to do deals to buy up these excess pollution rights. And the price could be spectacularly cheap, says Michael Grubb of the Royal Institute for International Affairs in London. "The US could buy up permits from Russia in return for cancelling Moscow's debts, which are in any case effectively written off. I believe this is part of the US state department's thinking."

This swap might square political circles but would have no effect whatever in reducing global emissions. The worst of all possible worlds could emerge in Kyoto — a global deal on tackling global warming that allows everyone to carry on as before.



Scientists are more united than ever before about the effects of greenhouse gases, says Paul Brown

ONLY Nero fiddled while Rome burned. Today, as the whole Earth begins to heat up and the climate changes before our eyes, world leaders are reaching for their fiddles in droves. Politicians admit that they can see the flames — or, to put it their way, they accept that the scientists' warnings about global warming are proving correct. Yet their reactions continue to be woefully inadequate.

The scientists are more united in their views than ever before. Action is needed quickly, they say: according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a 60 per cent reduction in current carbon dioxide emissions is urgently required to save the world from dangerous climate change. Note the word "dangerous". They point to evidence that the world is already heating up, currently by 0.1C a decade; and if the process speeds up, then natural systems will not be able to adapt.

In Canada, fir trees are already dying back: an indication that the vast forests of the United States, Canada and Russia will die in the heat before the next generations of saplings can establish themselves on the cooler northern edge of the forest. Another problem is the slowing down of the Gulf Stream which warms the west of the British Isles. This is caused by melting ice from Greenland, and the slow-down threatens Britain with more stormy and sometimes colder winter weather. Sir Robert May, the British government's chief scientific adviser, described this prospect as awesome.

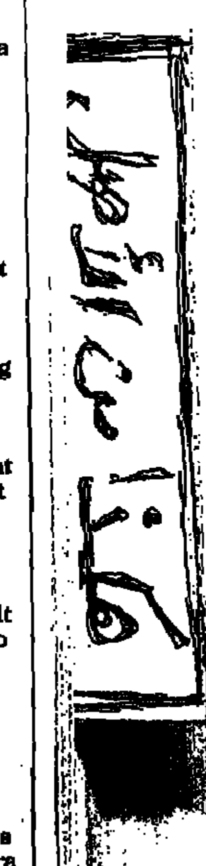
The US is also being made aware of the problem, not least because the most likely consequence of inaction is worldwide economic recession. At a World Bank conference in Washington earlier this month there were dire warnings about the effect on the world economy of the El Niño weather pattern. This is the movement of extra warm water from west to east in the Pacific, enough to disrupt trade winds and weather patterns over more than half the world. El Niño is causing the drought which is allowing the Indonesian fires to burn out of control. The World Bank conference was told that it was going to cause economic disruption through the Asia Pacific region and South America for the next 12 to 18 months.

Other science publications this month show that much of the frozen soil that underpins Alaska is melting. The permafrost acts as a foundation for roads, railways, and oil pipelines. With rising temperatures building foundations and airport runways are crumbling.

The solution is clear: carbon dioxide emissions must be cut. Carbon dioxide, although making up only a tiny percentage of air, acts as a barrier to prevent heat escaping. As with the glass in a greenhouse, it lets in the sunlight and prevents the heat getting out — hence the "greenhouse effect". There are other greenhouse gases, such as methane, but carbon dioxide poses the most difficult problem because it stays in the atmosphere for up to 100 years before being re-absorbed by plants or the oceans.

What makes it possible to set targets for cuts is the fact that carbon dioxide production can be measured. We know how much coal is burned in power stations and how much fuel goes into cars, and each nation's extra carbon dioxide can be calculated. Targets, however, are what the world cannot agree on.

Yet whatever compromise is reached, the problem will not wait for politicians. Dr Bob Watson, environment director at the World Bank, said: "We are approaching the point where the Earth's biological systems will not be able to meet our demands for goods and services on which we depend."



Microsoft faces $1m-a-day monopoly fine

Nicholas Bannister

MICROSOFT, the computer software group, is facing fines of up to $1 million a day for allegedly abusing its monopoly position.

The United States Justice Department this week asked a federal court to rule that the group headed by Bill Gates was breaking a 1995 court order by insisting that computer manufacturers licensed to use its Windows operating system also had to take a licence on its Internet Explorer web browser.

The US competition authority said that Microsoft was using the licensing practice to undermine the dominant position of rival Netscape in the web browser market. It is asking the court to fine Microsoft $1 million a day for contempt if the practice continues.

The move is a further sign that competition authorities are taking a tough approach to Microsoft and Intel, the microchip manufacturer.

Last week the European Commission announced it was investigating complaints that Microsoft was breaking EU competition law, and less than a month ago the US Federal Trade Commission announced a major investigation into Intel.

Microsoft is also on the receiving end of legal action by Sun Microsystems, which claims that the software group had broken the terms of its licence to use Sun's Java Internet language. Sun said the latest version of Microsoft's web browser — Internet Explorer 4 — was incompatible with other Java-based products, contrary to the licence agreement.

Microsoft dominates the world market for PC operating systems, but lags way behind Netscape in the Internet browser market.

Joel Klein, the US assistant attorney general and head of the anti-trust division, said that control of the browser market was important because it could erode Microsoft's operating system monopoly.

"What Microsoft is doing here is requiring PC manufacturers and through them, consumers in America, to take the Microsoft version of the browser in order to get Windows 95," he said. "Only Microsoft is able to do that because it alone has a monopoly on the underlying operating system software."

He added that the Justice Department was investigating other Microsoft activities, but did not name them.

The nub of the Justice Department's complaint is that the operating system and the browser are two completely separate products and their sale should not be linked.

Microsoft denied any wrongdoing in the way it sells its browser. "We've operated entirely within the consent decree and feel confident that we will have our opportunity in court to show that we are on the side of improvement and innovation of our products for consumers," a Microsoft spokesman said.

News of the Justice Department move brought an abrupt end to a sharp rise in Microsoft's shares.

Money makes the world go round

In the giving spirit of today **Larry Elliott** offers help to economics students

CANDIDATES for a Guardian scholarship in applied economics are asked to answer one of the following three questions.

Question one: The Government has decided that Britain will not join European monetary union in the course of this Parliament. Is this a) a loss of nerve that yet again leaves Britain in Europe's slow lane or b) a clear-headed assessment of the risks involved in what will be a leap in the dark?

Question two: "Globalisation, the free market and the search for international competitiveness are bad for the environment, bad for poor nations and create conditions of endemic insecurity in the West." Discuss.

Question three: Explore the parallel, if any, between *ancien régime* France — in particular Marie Antoinette's "let them eat cake" — and the $11 million package of pay and perks awarded to Mr Sam Chisholm, chief executive of Sky TV.

Candidates should need little help with the first question, to which the correct answer is b). The Government's decision not to be dragooned into single currency makes political and economic sense.

However, more assistance may be needed with questions two and three. The examiners realise that the almost universal view in recent years has been that globalisation is inevitable, free trade delivers optimal outcomes and international competitiveness should be the ultimate goal of policymakers everywhere.

So, for those tempted to challenge the orthodoxy, here are some rival thoughts, starting with a famous quotation. "I sympathise, therefore, with those who would minimise, rather than with those who would maximise, economic entanglement between nations. Ideas, knowledge, art, hospitality, travel — these are the things which should of their nature be international. But let goods be homespun whenever it is reasonable and conveniently possible, and above all, let finance be primarily national."

That, of course, is John Maynard Keynes, and for a long time policymakers took his advice. Finance was "primarily national" in the quarter-century after the war, the most successful period for the world economy, either before or since.

From 1970 on, almost every curb and constraint on capital has been stripped away. Finance now is not even remotely national; it is fundamentally global. Are we better off as a result? Ferrari is doing very nicely, flogging motors to the rash of twenty-something City bond dealers with million-pound bonuses in their back pockets.

But the evidence that free movement of capital has been a boon to the global economy is thinner on the ground. Growth rates are lower than they were in the Keynesian golden age, the rate of productivity increase is slower, income inequality is far greater, and we will draw a veil over what has happened to unemployment.

Globalised finance is a cause of instability and as a result has contributed to slower growth. It has made economies more vulnerable in the way that a ship without bulkheads is more vulnerable when it is holed because the water sloshes from side to side.

The classic counter-argument is that the state is now so enfeebled that any attempt to stand in the way of global finance would be like the Aztecs trying to fend off Cortez's guns with their bows and arrows. Actually, much of the supposed inability of governments to intervene in a Keynesian way stems from the fact that they have to devote the bulk of their resources to cleaning up the mess left by two decades of low growth, rising unemployment and increasing poverty. Governments could control capital if they had the will.

Having won the big battles over capital liberalisation, governments and their pals in trans-national companies pick up the war-cry that everybody must now strive to be more internationally competitive. This is an absurdity, because competitiveness is a zero-sum game. One country can become more competitive only at the expense of another.

A distinction has to be drawn between competitiveness and competition. Big business wants competitiveness; it is not so keen on competition. Competitiveness means higher profits, competition means lower profits. The economy would benefit far more from a regulatory regime that broke up the cartels and oligopolies than from a beggar-my-neighbour approach to cost-cutting.

Finally, a few words on free trade. The classic modern defence of comparative advantage was produced by Paul Samuelson in 1970. Free trade, he asserted, could be proved to be good for everybody. But Samuelson could prove that trade based on theory of comparative advantage worked for everybody only if he made five laughable assumptions: that there is no government; gainers compensate the losers from trade; capital and industry stay at home and do not set off around the world in a desperate search for the lowest wages; wages in the domestic economy are the same in every industry; and the country does not have a trade deficit.

The world economy, carved up between economic blocs, is not run along the lines of free trade but by the dictates of old-fashioned mercantilism. Take the decree of the World Trade Organisation that the European Union stops giving preferential treatment to the bananas from former British and French colonies, following a complaint brought by the United States on behalf of Chiquita, an American firm with plantations in Latin America. The Caribbean producers face ruin; they have no other comparative advantage — except, perhaps, in drugs.

To conclude, one answer to question two might be that the world would be better off with capital tamed, a degree of protectionism and a quest for local sustainability rather than international competitiveness. And question three? What would our new generation of trickle-down Marie Antoinettes say to their subjects? Let them eat bananas, obviously.

In Brief

SOUTHEAST Asian stock and currency markets continued to plunge. Last week's poor Wall Street showing drove Hong Kong's Hang Seng index below 13,000 for the first time in six months. In Bangkok, finance minister Thanong Bidaya quit amid fears that Thailand lacks the will to accept the conditions for an IMF bailout. Protesters called on prime minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh to resign.

THE Paris bourse was rewriting the record books after the first day of trading shot the newly-privatised group France Télécom to the top of the list of France's largest companies. The company is the world's fourth largest telecoms operator.

BRITISH Telecom, MCI and GTE Corporation are expected to meet for formal merger talks after GTE said it had made a $28 million cash bid for MCI. BT is thought to have abandoned plans to buy MCI in favour of a commercial alliance with a big US telecom company.

BSKYB'S chief executive, Sam Chisholm, was paid more than $11 million last year, making him the highest paid UK director of a public company. Details were announced as the satellite broadcaster published its annual records and accounts.

BRITISH manufacturing has been dealt a savage export blow by the strength of the pound, according to the latest quarterly survey from the British Chambers of Commerce. It has called on the Bank of England to avoid further rises in interest rates. Meanwhile Britain's jobless total has fallen for the 19th month in a row, according to figures released by the Office for National Statistics.

RICHARD Branson declared war on Britain's high street banks and building societies with the launch of what he claims is a revolutionary new banking account. Virgin One is the latest addition to a $5 billion-a-year empire that includes everything from planes and trains to dresses and cosmetics.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates October 20	Sterling rates October 18
Australia	2.2304-2.2333	2.2085-2.2128
Austria	20.31-20.34	19.98-20.01
Belgium	59.51-59.61	58.60-58.70
Canada	2.2574-2.2598	2.2392-2.2422
Denmark	10.99-11.00	10.81-10.82
France	9.678-9.689	9.53-9.54
Germany	2.8869-2.8898	2.8399-2.8428
Hong Kong	12.62-12.63	12.58-12.59
Ireland	1.1052-1.1078	1.1118-1.1147
Italy	2,819-2,821	2,790-2,793
Japan	197.63-197.92	195.99-196.24
Netherlands	3.2525-3.2561	3.1991-3.2024
New Zealand	2.5362-2.5397	2.5075-2.5110
Norway	11.57-11.58	11.36-11.37
Portugal	294.08-294.42	288.70-289.04
Spain	243.47-243.88	239.60-239.92
Sweden	12.39-12.40	12.26-12.27
Switzerland	2.3981-2.4008	2.3713-2.3744
USA	1.6300-1.6310	1.6226-1.6239
ECU	1.4652-1.4670	1.4478-1.4495

FTSE100 Share Index down 89.1 at 5211.0. FTSE 250 Index down 11.5 at 4906.5. Gold down $4.00 at $324.85.

Clinton Woos Partners in South America

John F. Harris and Anthony Faiola

SURROUNDED by cheering children in a schoolyard in Rio de Janeiro last week, President Clinton was extolling the power of the Internet to tear down borders and unite the Americas.

On a crumbling tenement next door hung a banner with a less inviting message: "Go Back to USA!"

That dissenting note echoed an era of widespread anti-U.S. sentiment that is receding rapidly in South America. At the same time, Clinton's vision of a prospering hemisphere linked by good will and high-tech trade "from Alaska to Patagonia" is an idea that, at least based on last week's evidence, remains some distance in the future.

On a seven-day, six-stop tour of South America that ended on October 18, Clinton encountered a political culture in transition. The government leaders, business executives, students and journalists Clinton met in Venezuela, Brazil and Argentina plainly did not want the Yankee to go home, but they did insist that he explain himself and redefine U.S. relationships.

At every turn, people wanted assurances that the United States is not threatened by the increasingly powerful economies in the nations Clinton visited. They were alert to any possible slight. And they made clear that South America is determined to approach its powerful northern neighbor on more equal terms.

At every turn, Clinton paid deference to the new mood. He cooed over the economic and political progress South America has made. He insisted that the United States is pleased by the emergence of the South American trading bloc known as Mercosur.

And he spoke a new language for a visiting U.S. president. When then-president George Bush came to South America, much of the discussion was about U.S. aid and restructuring the massive debt these nations owed. Clinton last week kept repeating the word "partners," and virtually every time he offered a criticism, such as of disparities of wealth in South America, he took pains to emphasize that the United States is grappling with similar issues.

Clinton was the first president in 20 years not to come to Latin America during his first term of office, a fact that was widely interpreted in the region as showing a lack of interest. But the sheer repetition of his reassurances last week apparently helped put relations on more solid ground.

This improved atmosphere is, for the most part, substituting for more tangible gains. The few policy advances on the trip included an agreement that will accelerate U.S. investment in the petroleum industry in Venezuela, which recently has become a large source of U.S. imported oil. And Clinton and Argentine President Carlos Menem formally announced a previously reported agreement on global warming. Argentina endorsed the concept that developing nations should be subject to binding limits on greenhouse gases, albeit less restrictive limits than the ones that developed nations are expected to agree to at a conference in Japan in December

But neither these nor the other joint agreements, administration officials acknowledged, needed a presidential visit for them to come to fruition.

Clinton and Menem made their global warming announcement before a breathtaking vista of snow-capped mountains and icy blue lakes near Bariloche, an Andean resort near the Chilean border in Argentina's Patagonia region.

In an interview with Argentine reporters, Clinton spoke broadly about the political and economic integration he is seeking in the world. "What I'm trying to do is promote a process of reorganization of the world so that human beings are organized in a way that takes advantage of the new opportunities of this era and permits them to beat back the problems," he said.

There were other signs of anti-Americanism on the trip. In Brasilia, a small band of protesters threw horse dung at Clinton's motorcade. And in Buenos Aires, there was a riot that led to 150 arrests.

For the most part, however, what greeted Clinton was not hostility but ambivalence. He never generated the sort of spontaneous public response that he often has on other trips abroad; his largest crowd was a couple of thousand people in Caracas, which filled only a third of the square where he was speaking.

Anti-U.S. demonstrators clash with Brazilian police in the capital, Brasilia, during President Clinton's visit last week. But anti-U.S. sentiment is receding in South America PHOTOGRAPH: ANTONIO SCORZA

Sanctions Prove To Be a Blunt Weapon

OPINION
Jim Hoagland

IN THE conduct of foreign policy, the United States today resembles an eccentric, wealthy geezer who has amassed a fortune but forgotten why, who is rapidly losing the will and ability to get out of the mansion and spend his treasure usefully.

The fortune in this case is global power — military, political and diplomatic power, supported by the country's uncontested economic vitality. The Republican-led Congress and the Clinton administration have joined in unwitting conspiracy to spread confusion abroad about America's purpose and potency in the post-Cold War world.

This confusion is most vividly illustrated by the tangle of good intentions and bad outcomes that surround the use of economic sanctions to punish nations or foreign firms that displease America's lawmakers. The useful scalpel of sanctions has been blunted by being used too often as an ax.

The Clinton administration and Congress have made sanctions the foreign policy tool of first resort in a world in which American military and other coercive power has lost much of its credibility — in part because that power is so overwhelming and thus difficult to wield with precision.

This syndrome of weakness through strength is a result of individual political judgments and larger historical forces. As his critics are quick to note, President Clinton has shown a distinct unease with the risks and responsibilities of committing U.S. forces abroad or using covert action effectively against America's enemies. Iraq, Central Africa and Bosnia are cases in point.

But Congress as a body has been even more squeamish and unpredictable in supporting the use of coercive power, second-guessing Clinton shamelessly in the Balkans and elsewhere. The result of such second-guessing is to fragment the consensus that is needed if U.S. power is to be used to topple or forcefully restrain Third World regimes that threaten or work against U.S. interests.

Instead of contributing to a coherent, effective package of restraints and punishment for such regimes, Republican senators such as Jesse Helms and Alfonse D'Amato play to the grandstands: They legislate secondary economic boycotts to register disgust with Fidel Castro (Helms' target), the ayatollahs of Iran (D'Amato) or other targets of influential U.S. lobbies that contribute to campaign coffers.

Helms & Co. leave to Clinton the messy and ultimately unworkable details of their flawed unilateral sanctions laws, which are not accepted by America's allies as valid or wise. Worse, these senators ignore the undercutting effect of their handiwork on the international acceptance of sanctions as a legitimate foreign policy tool.

Sanctions work when enough countries join together to make them credible and effective. Here the cases in point are Iraq and Libya. But sanctions fatigue and the resentment that the Helms-D'Amato approach has sparked abroad are now undermining U.S. efforts to toughen the existing sanctions to deter new misbehavior by Saddam or Gadhafi, or to seek new sanctions in Nigeria, the Congo and elsewhere.

Privately U.S. officials acknowledge they face growing opposition to keeping the present sanctions in place on Iraq and Libya during scheduled reviews this autumn in the U.N. Security Council.

"We are stumbling over ourselves as we run around, reacting to the challenges to sanctions by the bad guys and their friends, and dealing with an unilateralist Congress," admits one senior administration official. "It would be farcical if it were not such serious business."

The administration, to its credit, recognizes the immediate problem and plans a "bottom-up review" of existing U.S. sanctions.

But both the administration and Congress need to recognize as well the longer-term problem: Sanctions are a malleable, eventually unreliable substitute for the effective use of power to confront regimes that openly threaten American interests and lives. Unlike diamonds, sanctions are not forever.

Cambodia's Stolen Democracy

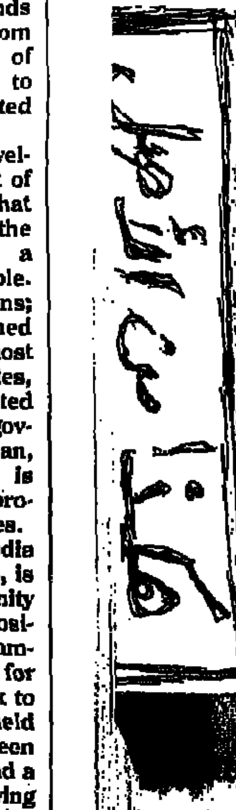
EDITORIAL

MORE THAN three months have passed since Hun Sen staged his coup in Cambodia. The elected prime minister was deposed, and many of his supporters were executed or forced into exile. Since then, despite many virtuous promises from Cambodia's strongman, conditions have not improved. Human rights workers live in fear. Many opposition politicians remain abroad. The press is under assault. Just last week, the Information Ministry canceled a television show because its host had called the government undemocratic.

Cambodians are paying a steep price for Hun Sen's tyranny. After years of terrible civil war, their country had begun to put itself back together. Elections had been held under U.N. supervision. Investors from the far more vibrant economies of Cambodia's neighbors in Southeast Asia had begun to build factories and hotels. Independent media and civic associations were flourishing. Now the economy is in a tailspin. Many investors have pulled out and show no inclination to return. Foreign aid, which comprised half of Cambodia's budget, has been choked off. Internationally, Cambodia finds itself isolated — excluded from ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Nations, unable to take its seat at the United Nations.

That isolation reflects a welcome consensus among most of the international community that Hun Sen's effort to undo the U.N. attempts at creating a democracy is not acceptable. There are some exceptions; Australia inexplicably resumed most aid, for example. But most donors, led by the United States, so far have held firm. The United States is helping only non-governmental organizations; Japan, although its public position is weak, has reinstated some projects but approved no new ones.

The key, now that Cambodia has faded from the headlines, is for the international community to maintain a principled position. A sham election, for example, should not be enough for Hun Sen to win his way back to respectability. Elections, if held next spring, should be overseen by international observers and a caretaker government, allowing free access to the media for all parties. Hun Sen's political opposition must be allowed to return, with no threat of bodily harm or show trials. And human rights organizations and the press should be restored to their previous circumstances — even if they want to call Hun Sen undemocratic. Hun Sen's bluster notwithstanding, the international donors could make a big difference in shaping Cambodia's future — if they stick together.



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
October 26 1997

Jiang Aims to Boost China-U.S. Ties

Steven Mufson and Robert G. Kaiser in Shanghai

PREPARING for an ambitious state visit to the United States this weekend, Chinese President Jiang Zemin said that he hopes to raise Chinese-American relations "to a new level."

In a rare interview with an American newspaper, Jiang urged Americans to tolerate China's political system and seek "common ground despite differences." He also said China and the United States "share the responsibility for preserving world peace and stability."

Chinese and American sources outlined a series of initiatives designed to achieve Jiang's aim of forging a strategic partnership with the Clinton administration during the visit. Sources said China will pledge to end sales of cruise missiles to Iran, which the United States has seen as a threat to shipping in the Persian Gulf. The sources also said last week that the two countries would sign an accord at the summit pledging coordination to avoid naval incidents at sea and that they probably would agree to implement a 1985 agreement on nuclear cooperation that would allow American companies to sell China nuclear power plants and equipment.

More broadly, the Chinese are pressing a reluctant Clinton administration to make a joint declaration affirming the common strategic interests of the two nations and pledging to work together to guarantee "stability" in the 21st century. The Chinese would like such a statement to reiterate U.S. support for "one China," reaffirming the principle that Taiwan should someday rejoin the mainland.

In his interview here last week, Jiang at times read from a prepared script and at other times spoke extemporaneously, interspersing his comments with snippets of Russian and English, a line from Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and Chinese proverbs. He defended the 1989 crackdown on the Tiananmen Square student uprising, said Chinese leaders were on "high alert" over the U.S.-Japanese security alliance and said that under China's market reforms the Communist Party plays a role in helping foreign investors manage labor problems.

But Jiang strayed little from the rhetorical formulations of the past, reasserting China's sovereignty over Tibet and Taiwan, and declaring that China must limit the scope of direct democratic participation in order to ensure stability and economic progress. "The theory of relativity worked out by Mr. [Albert] Einstein, which is in the domain of natural science, I believe can also be applied to the political field," Jiang said. "Both democracy and human rights are relative concepts and not absolute and general."

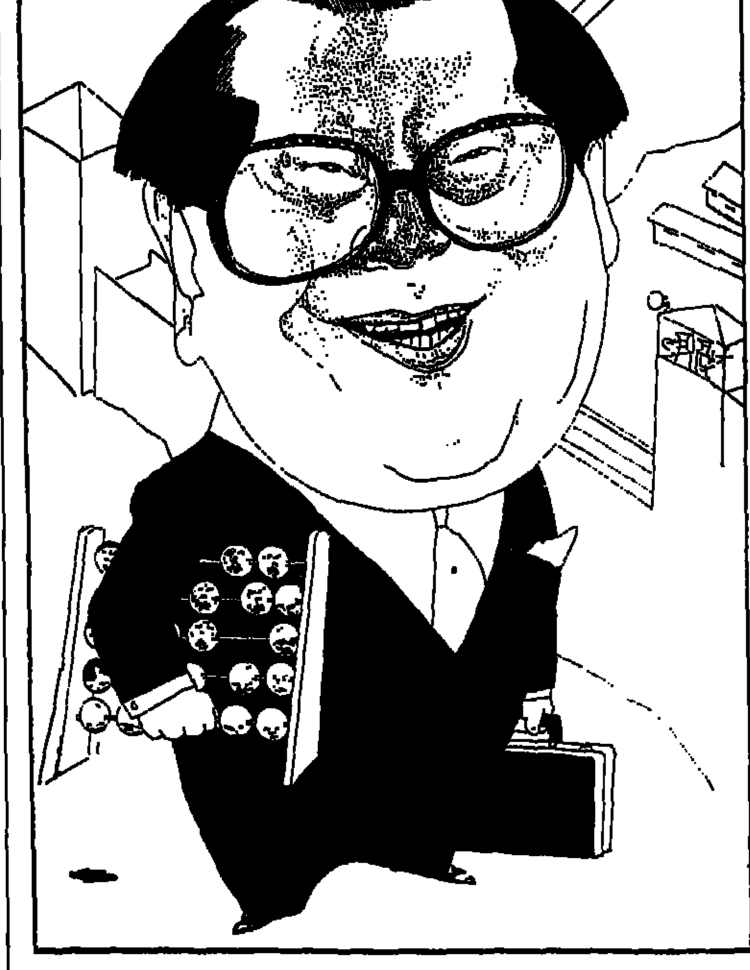
These political issues could be potential flash points during Jiang's trip, the first state visit to the United States by a Chinese president since 1985. Both Chinese and American officials have warned Jiang that the trip will be marked by human rights protests, particularly involving Tibet, and blunt questions of the sort that would not be permitted here in China.

Nonetheless, Jiang hopes that his trip will smooth over the tensions of recent years and complete China's eight-year effort to restore relations with the United States to what they had been before at least several hundred people were killed on the streets of Beijing in a bloody army crackdown on demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

"We have to seize this opportunity to promote understanding between our two countries," Jiang said. "No matter how telecommunications develop, they cannot replace face-to-face talks. They are very important for carrying out an exchange of feelings and sentiments."

Other Chinese officials made clear that Beijing's expectations of the summit are high. "We expect a lot," said Chu Shulong, an expert on U.S. relations with the Chinese Institute of Contemporary and International Relations. "We want the leaders to enhance strategic understanding, talk about how they see the world today and into the 21st century and how the two countries can work together to make a stable world."

China's apparent willingness to cut off cruise missile sales to Iran and to give assurances that it has stopped all support for nuclear programs in Iran and Pakistan — the latter a key to winning approval for American firms to sell China nuclear-power generating equipment — are further indications of Beijing's ambitions for improved relations with Washington.



As he prepares to leave for the United States, Jiang appears more dominant at home than at any time since he assumed power in 1989, after the Tiananmen Square episode. Deng Xiaoping, China's paramount leader at the time, installed Jiang as general secretary of the Communist Party, but at first Jiang lacked the standing or authority to seize meaningful control of China.

In the eight years since, he has steadily neutralized rivals, promoted allies and assumed new titles, and now stands apparently unchallenged atop the government, the military and the Communist Party. At a party congress last month he was able to make personnel changes that put his stamp more clearly on the leadership of all the major institutions of Chinese life.

Nevertheless, Jiang remains a relatively colorless figure, and Chinese from many walks of life express opinions of him ranging from toleration to intense dislike.

Many scripts have been prepared for his U.S. visit, though Jiang has agreed to submit himself to several unscripted events, including an interview on The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer and a joint news conference with President Clinton. Chinese academics have drafted hundreds, perhaps thousands of analyses, positions and speeches on Jiang's visit and Sino-American relations.

Some Chinese officials and advisers to the government who studied in the United States urged that Jiang avoid appearing at Harvard University for fear of a hostile reception there. But advisers to Jiang said the president insisted on speaking at the prestigious Cambridge, Massachusetts, campus, one of several stops where aides say he knows he may encounter protests because of the large number of politically active students in the area.

The new China Jiang represents on his trip to the United States is far removed from the dreary dictatorship that Mao Zedong left to his successors 21 years ago. Urban Chinese can now eat at McDonald's and Pizza Hut, shop at Esprit, surf the Internet, wear miniskirts and makeup, and lead independent lives almost wholly outside the domain of state and Communist Party.

Jiang plans to begin his visit to the United States with a stop in Hawaii, where he will lay a wreath at a memorial for American soldiers killed in the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. "Lessons from that incident cannot and should not be forgotten," Jiang said. He expressed China's lingering antipathy toward and anxiety about Japan, left over from Japan's brutal occupation of much of China from 1937 to 1945. "We still hear occasional echoes of Japanese militarism that are inconsistent with history, so we need to be alert against it," Jiang said.

The Pearl Harbor stop is a way for Jiang to press China's concerns about the strategic alliance between the United States and Japan. China has become worried that the recently strengthened mutual defense pact is actually aimed at China now that the Soviet threat has disappeared.

"To be frank, we are on very high alert regarding this Japan-U.S. military treaty," Jiang said. "And we hope that this treaty is not directed at China." He said China also worries that the alliance changes, completed just after the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis — when China fired missile tests off the coast of Taiwan just before Taiwan's presidential elections and 16 U.S. warships sailed to the area — were directed at intervening in Taiwan.

Jiang also expressed concern about U.S. pressure on China to alter its political system. "How can the American way of elections be organized in China when we have over 1.2 billion people and more than 100 million who can't read or write?" Jiang said. Instead, Jiang said in a theme likely to be replayed during his American journey, China's top priority had to be economic development.

It is issues like Tibet and the possibility of embarrassing confrontations that make many Chinese government officials anxious about Jiang's trip. Tibet, which Chinese troops occupied during the 1950s, is regarded by Beijing as a part of China. But many Tibetans advocate independence and believe that the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Buddhist Dalai Lama is the region's rightful leader.

The issue seemed to be on the president's mind when in a discussion about his fondness for Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, he said: "Lincoln was a remarkable leader, particularly in liberating the slaves in America." He added. "Most of China got rid of slavery long ago, except in Tibet, where it was not until the Dalai Lama left that we eliminated serfdom."

N. Korea Faces Another Bleak Harvest

Keith B. Richburg in Pyongyang

NORTH KOREA is facing another bleak harvest season of disappointing crop yields, and will need continued food aid from donor countries to avoid widespread starvation, according to North Korean government officials and foreign relief workers based here.

A three-day visit to this secretive Stalinist nation, perhaps the most closed society in the world, by a U.S. congressman and a Washington Post correspondent provided ample evidence to back up that view. The congressman, Rep. Tony P. Hall, D-Ohio, said conditions in rural areas appeared to have worsened since he last visited North Korea in April.

Hall added that his talks with North Korean officials left him optimistic that the government might soon agree to resume preliminary talks with the United States and South Korea aimed at easing tensions on the Korean peninsula. The North Koreans asked him for assurances that food would not be used as a coercive political weapon.

The itinerary of Hall's group included stops where North Korea's persistent food shortage is evident. For example, in an orphanage in Hamhung, a gritty industrial town in the central mountains, most of the children appeared too small for their ages and displayed the signs of malnutrition — patches of hair missing, sores on their scalps, and in the case of some of the smallest infants, a lifeless, listless look and a lack of any response to touching or talking.

An official assessment of North Korea's food needs will not come until later this month, after a team from the U.N. World Food Program completes an on-site inspection scheduled to begin this week.

But the preliminary estimate, from government officials and relief workers, is that North Korea — which has faced severe food shortages since 1995 — may produce only about half of what it needs to feed its 24 million people this year, and that in some hard-hit areas of the mountainous north as much as 70 percent of the corn crop may be lost.

The visit came just nine days after North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, 55, took over as head of the governing Korean Workers' Party, the nation's top post. Kim's father Kim Il Sung, founder of the Communist state, died in July 1994; the younger Kim has been in charge ever since.

Some of the scenes of hunger and deprivation were stark, similar to parts of Africa and surprising in a heavily industrialized northeast Asian country. There were hospitals without medicine, where surgery was performed with little or no anesthesia and no electricity, and where the only warmth to guard against the cold mountain air was from blankets.

Most of the food from the United States and relief agencies is targeted at the most vulnerable groups, primarily children 6 years old and younger. In most areas visited, doctors, local government officials and the directors of kindergartens and nursery schools said getting food for the youngsters was not as difficult as before.

The major problem now seems to be hunger among the general population. In impromptu interviews around the country, most North Koreans said they do not have enough to eat. In Hamhung town, a middle-aged woman with a deeply lined face said through a Korean-American interpreter, not supplied by the government, "We eat tree leaves, stems, corn husks. Just a small amount of corn mixed with tree leaves — that's how we survive."

"The food that's targeted to the children is getting through," Hall said in an interview aboard a U.S. Air Force jet taking his party out of the capital back to Yokota Air Base outside Tokyo. "But we've got a long way to go. The people in North Korea over 7 years old are in trouble."

Hall later issued an appeal for a stepped-up response to the North Korean crisis. But he also said the North Korean government needs to make changes to its economic management, such as allowing more private cultivation of land.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
October 26 1997

Nanny Murder Case Puts Mother on Trial

Christopher B. Daly in Cambridge, Massachusetts

AS SHE sits quietly in a bland courtroom here, listening to the testimony and charges against her, Louise Woodward, a 19-year-old British nanny, has come to represent every parent's worst nightmare.

Brought to the United States through a program for young Europeans, Woodward is accused of taking out her frustrations with her work conditions on the eight-month-old baby boy left in her charge, shaking him so violently, and slamming him into a hard surface, that he lapsed into a coma on February 4 and died five days later.

Woodward is facing first-degree murder charges in the trial that began this month. Her case, covered live on Court TV, has sparked a debate over screening for nannies and, more broadly, over the perils working parents may face when they leave their children in someone else's care.

A similar case nearly two years ago in Loudoun County, Virginia, involving a Dutch au pair charged with shaking to death a newborn. In that instance, a mistrial was declared.

Although it is Woodward who is on trial, intense public scrutiny has fallen on the mother, Deborah Eappen, an ophthalmologist who had returned to work three days a week after her second child, Matthew, was born. She has received hate mail and been attacked by callers to radio talk shows, who have blamed her for causing the tragedy by not staying home with her children. The couple also have another son, who was 2 at the time of Matthew's death.

Eappen's husband, Sunil, is also a doctor, and the family lives in Newton, a leafy suburb west of Boston that is home to many physicians, lawyers and other professionals.

Since the killing, Deborah Eappen has seen herself "transformed by personal tragedy into a public symbol of maternal neglect and yuppie greed," wrote Eileen McNamara, a columnist for the Boston Globe. McNamara wrote of one recent hate letter that accused Eappen of "greed and poor judgment" for leaving her baby with an au pair for the sake of her "lifestyle."

"One of the underlying themes in the case is blaming Mom," said Caryl Rivers, a Boston University professor who has written about dual-career couples. "The subtext here is, whenever anything happens to the child, if the mother is working, the mother is automatically to blame ... It's never Dad's problem."

Rivers said studies of child deaths indicate that babies and toddlers are much more likely to be killed by a parent or other relative than by a babysitter or day-care provider.

But the case has also focused attention on the government-sponsored au pair program through which Woodward and thousands of other young Europeans, mostly women, are brought to the United States for a cultural exchange.

Woodward's stay in the Eappen home was arranged by E F Au Pair, which operates across the United States and is one of eight such agencies recognized by the United States Information Agency. More than 10,000 U.S. families participate in the program every year, providing a home to a young man or woman from abroad in return for up to 45 hours of child care a week, and not more than 10 hours a day.

The duties of all parties are spelled out in USIA regulations that govern eligibility, pay and working conditions. The rules also require au pairs to be trained in child care. Many other agencies supply families with a variety of nannies, babysitters and day care under various terms but not as part of an official cultural exchange.

Since the death of Matthew Eappen, some nannies in the au pair program have complained that they have been made to work more hours than the 45 permitted; some employers, meanwhile, have said that agencies supplying the nannies do not do adequate background checks to be certain the people they provide are mature and balanced enough to care for children.

Woodward could face life in prison if convicted of the first-degree murder charges.

In his opening statement, prosecutor Gerard T. Leone Jr. said the evidence would show that Matthew Eappen was "violently slammed against a hard object and violently shaken, causing massive head injuries."

Woodward, who was alone at the time with Matthew and his brother, has denied striking Matthew but acknowledged that she may have been a "little rough" with him.

Prosecutors have called on medical experts and the coroner who examined Matthew's body. Most of the state's witnesses agree that the baby had suffered a recent, violent trauma.

Under cross-examination by Woodward attorney Barry Scheck, however, several of the prosecution's witnesses have acknowledged that Matthew Eappen was not cut or bruised and that some of his injuries could have been inflicted before February 4. The defense has tried to suggest that Matthew had older injuries that would indicate chronic abuse — perhaps at someone else's hands.

British nanny Louise Woodward smiles at family members as she arrives for a court session PHOTOGRAPH: BIZUAYEHU TESFAYE

Seal Harvest Reopens Controversy

Howard Schneider in Toronto

CANADA'S seal hunters have quadrupled the size of their annual catch over the last two years to the highest levels since the early 1970s.

With government price subsidies and other assistance in helping open new overseas markets for seal pelts, penises and pepperoni, the largely Newfoundland-based seal fleet is now harvesting about 250,000 animals each winter — the greatest number since images of dewy-eyed pups being clubbed on the ice began forcing a downturn in the harvest in the early 1970s.

As a result, animal rights activists are preparing what they say will be their most aggressive effort in years to shut the industry down. Rather than imported talent — Bardot weighed in at one point, and a Barbie doll sticker album helped out in the mid-1980s — they have enlisted only home-grown Canadian celebs to lead the charge.

At the top of the list: Capt. James T. Kirk. "As a Canadian, I think the commercial seal hunt sends the wrong image of our country," Star Trek actor William Shatner declares on a page of quotes attributed to a group of Canadian actors, writers and activists distributed this month by the International Fund for Animal Welfare. "To slaughter those baby seals in what is supposed to be an enlightened age is totally inexcusable."

"We don't slaughter [baby] whitecoats, and for those who do, action is taken," said Jacque Robichaud, director general of resource management for Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

It is true that the killing of newborn seals for their snow-white pelts has been illegal for years in Canada, banned as worldwide public pressure rose against the practice in the 1970s and 1980s. But it is also true that it still happens; last fall, federal officials charged 101 Newfoundland fishermen with the illegal sale of nearly 15,000 seal pup pelts.

Perhaps it is to be expected that, entering season three of a reinvigorated Canadian seal hunt, the rhetoric will be thick.

For a while, the battle seemed to subside, as the animal welfare fund gained the upper hand. The United States and Europe restricted seal imports. The annual harvest fell to a low of about 60,000 animals each year.

That began changing three years ago, when the federal department of fisheries was run by Newfoundland politician Brian Tobin, who is now the province's premier.

The allowable catch of seals was increased to 275,000, a number fisheries officials say can be sustained by the current population. The government began supporting the price of seal meat with subsidies that topped $1 million in their first year. The bigger impetus, however, came from the opening of new Asian markets for seal pelts and penises.

Feisty Egyptian Newspaper Refuses to Be Silenced

John Lancaster in Cairo

AFTER running foul of Egypt's powerful interior minister recently, the newspaper al-Shaab was barred from publishing for two weeks. But editors found a creative way around the ban; they arranged to publish their articles on the inside pages of a sympathetic rival.

Such brazen disregard for authority is typical of al-Shaab, an outspoken opposition weekly whose sensational, if not always reliable, accounts of low doings in high places have proved as popular with readers as they are infuriating to the government.

More broadly, the episode sheds light on the curious state of press freedom in a country torn between the authoritarian instincts of its rulers and growing public pressure for accountable, representative government.

As elsewhere in the Arab world, the military-backed government of President Hosni Mubarak often has tried to silence or intimidate internal critics, especially those who take on senior officials and their close relatives.

"Our main problem is that we crossed this red line," said al-Shaab editor Magdi Hussein, 46, who will be tried this month on criminal charges stemming from a libel case brought by the interior minister, Hassan Alfi. "It is an unwritten law that the opposition cannot speak about corruption in the very highest ranks."

Perhaps more surprising, however, is that newspapers like al-Shaab can publish at all. For all the constraints on press freedom in Egypt, journalists here enjoy considerably more latitude than those in many Arab countries. Especially striking is the proliferation of stories on the pervasive official corruption that is linked in the minds of many Egyptians to free-market economic reforms initiated in the early 1990s.

The result is a kind of standoff, with Egyptian journalists constantly probing the limits of press freedom and, not infrequently, provoking a backlash from government officials. Lately, the forces of censorship have appeared to gain the upper hand.

In recent weeks, authorities sentenced a journalist to six months in jail for what they contend was a libelous newspaper expose on business dealings of Mubarak's two sons; expelled Thomas Cromwell, publisher of the Middle East Times, an English-language weekly owned by the Washington Times that has been sharply critical of the government's human rights record; and banned an issue of al-Hayat, a London-based Arabic daily, for an article on a sensitive border dispute between Egypt and Sudan.

Last month, the Interior Ministry barred local and foreign media from reporting any details of its investigation into the massacre of nine German tourists by Islamic militants in downtown Cairo.

Egypt's constitution guarantees free expression, and Mubarak told Egyptian newspaper editors last month that he is unequivocally opposed to censorship. When asked to explain such contradictions, government officials do so in terms that border on the surreal.

In August, for example, the Middle East Times published a transcript of its interview with Lutfi Khader, who heads the office responsible for reviewing foreign print media and repeatedly has barred the newspaper from publishing what he considers sensitive material. "There is no censorship," Khader insisted. "If there is something we don't approve [of], we say to the people: 'Don't write it again.' Like what we do with your newspaper." Any criticism of the president or his immediate family is clearly off limits. Last year, for example, Mubarak signed a restrictive new press law setting harsh criminal penalties for, among other things, articles that "show contempt for state institutions or officials."

After protests from the journalists' union, he rescinded the provisions of the law considered most onerous but left in place criminal penalties for insulting the president, his family and foreign heads of state. The provision has been widely interpreted among Egyptian journalists as a direct response to rumors of shady business practices — denied by the government — on the part of Mubarak's two sons.

Al-Shaab is the mouthpiece of the opposition Labor Party and is close to the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic fundamentalist group that is the country's largest political opposition movement.

Articles over the last few months have accused Alfi and his relatives of amassing a large fortune while he was a civil servant. Alfi has denied any wrongdoing. Last month, Prosecutor General Rigaa Arabi charged Hussein and several other journalists at the newspaper with defamation and banned further media coverage of the case.

Hussein said he has no intention of backing down from the paper's accusations and is gratified by the support he has received from other journalists. Even in the semiofficial pro-government press, prominent columnists have called on Alfi to answer the charges raised in al-Shaab.

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October 26 1997

A Blast Felt Round the World

Michael Dirda

UNDERWORLD
By Don DeLillo
Scribner, 827 pp. $27.50

DON DELILLO's eagerly awaited new novel, Underworld, is extremely long, no question about it. But that's as close to a criticism as you'll find here: I'd have been happy if the book were the length of Possession, Atlas Shrugged, Invisible Man and Studs Lonigan combined.

That it recalls all these very different modern classics, as well as much of DeLillo's earlier work (End Zone, Libra), is a measure of both its ambition and quite awesome achievement. This is a novel, after all, that draws together baseball, the Bomb, J. Edgar Hoover, waste disposal, drugs, gangs, Vietnam, fathers and sons, the comic Lenny Bruce and the Cuban Missile Crisis.

And that's just for openers. It also depicts passionate adultery, weapons testing, the care of aging mothers, the postwar Bronx, '60s civil rights demonstrations, popular culture, advertising, graffiti artists, Catholic education, chess and murder. And still we're not through. There's a viewing of a lost Eisenstein film, meditations on the Watts Tower, an evening at Truman Capote's Black & White Ball, a hot-air balloon ride, serial murders in Texas, a camping trip in the Southwest, a nun on the Internet, reflections on history, one hit (or possibly two) by the New York mob and an apparent miracle. Most amazingly, none of this seems jumbled or arbitrary: As DeLillo says and proves, "Everything is connected in the end."

Such richness. Think of Underworld as a great Victorian-style panoramic novel — The Way We Live Now, say — or even as a 12-part miniseries, titled perhaps "Cold War and Remembrance". For DeLillo's masterpiece provides both a cultural history of America during the Bomb era and a journey into the past.

> **'I want to give pleasure through language . . . and through characters who may be funny, nasty, violent, or all of these'**

The main character is Nick Shay, in the 1990s an aging waste-disposal expert but in his youth a dropout from the Bronx. Nick is the common element in several of the novel's principal obsessions. In his rowdy youth he takes up briefly with a neighborhood housewife, Klara Sax, who eventually remakes herself into a world-renowned artist, part Christo, part Georgia O'Keefe. Nick also comes to possess what may be the legendary baseball, homered by Bobby Thomson, that unexpectedly gave the 1951 pennant to the Giants. As it happens, on that very same day, October 3, the Russians set off a powerful atomic blast, thus heating up the Cold War. And sometime in his youth, Nick seems to have committed a murder. Nuclear weapons, waste, the fate of that fateful baseball and the destinies of an ordinary man and his loved ones intertwine for 800 pages.

In an interview, DeLillo once asserted, "I want to give pleasure through language, through the architecture of a book or a sentence and through characters who may be funny, nasty, violent, or all of these." Underworld delivers on every count.

Consider a few sentences. The moody stand-up entertainer Lenny Bruce resembles "a poolshark who'd graduated to deeper and sleazier schemes." In one performance he maniacally sums up every other Swedish art film of the '60s: "Ursula Andress naked to the waist with a slain calf slung over her shoulder." When the formidable Sister Edgar is glimpsed, she is "diagramming a compound sentence, the chalked structure so complex and self-appending it began to resemble the fire-escaped facade of the kind of building most of the boys and girls lived in." After the Texas Highway Killer calls in to a news program to explain his crimes, he says: "I hope this talk has been conducive to understand the situation better. For me to request that I would only talk to Sue Ann Corcoran, one-on-one, that was intentional on my part. I saw the interview you did where you stated you'd like to keep your career, you know, ongoing while you hopefully raise a family and I feel like this is a thing whereby the superstation has the responsibility to keep the position open, okay, because an individual should not be penalized for lifestyle type choices."

Underworld crackles with such memorable formulations. "A museum was empty rooms with knights in armor where you had one sleepy guard for every seven centuries." Nick's brother Matt serves in Vietnam "where everything he'd ever disbelieved or failed to imagine turned out, in the end, to be true".

DeLillo can do voices — the Texas killer, a Jewish paranoid, Russian capitalists, artsy New Yorkers — as well as aphorisms. Here's a thrilling old black street preacher: "You see the eye that hangs over this pyramid here. What's pyramids doing on American money? You see the number they got strung out at the base of this pyramid. This is how they flash their Masonic codes to each other. This is Freemason, the passwords and handshakes. This is Rosicrucian, the beam of light. This is webs and scribbles all over the bill, front and the back, that contains a message . . . They predicting the day and the hour. They telling each other when the time is come. You can't find the answer in the Bible or the Bill of Rights. I'm talking to you. I'm saying history is written on the commonest piece of paper in your pocket."

As should be evident, Underworld is rippled throughout with humor. Just before the Black & White Ball, an earnest Clyde Tolson informs J. Edgar Hoover about a plot to steal the director's trash cans. "Confidential source says they intend to take your garbage on tour. Rent halls in major cities. Get lefty sociologists to analyze the garbage item by item. Get hippies to rub it on their naked bodies. More or less have sex with it. Get poets to write poems about it. And finally, in the last city on the tour, they plan to eat it . . . And expel it . . . publicly." That night, at the ball itself, Clyde dances with a provocative young masked woman who suddenly whispers, "If you kiss him, I'll stick my tongue so far down your throat . . . It will pierce your heart."

Formidable characters, themes, language — there's almost none of that icy detachment for which DeLillo has occasionally been faulted. Even his fascination with conspiracy and paranoia fits not only the times but also his novel's intricate architecture. After an opening prologue, set in 1951, the narrative leapfrogs to the early 1990s, and then gradually works its way back in time toward explosions of sex and death in the summer of 1952. An epilogue eventually returns us to the present. In effect, as we read, we penetrate beneath history's surface, gradually descending into the past, that underworld which shapes our lives.

Of course, DeLillo rings other changes on the meaning of underworld, associating it with crime, dreams, the afterlife, subway tunnels and even that lost film masterpiece by Eisenstein, "Unterwelt". Similarly, the novel creates numerous doubles and mirrorings: Moonman decorates subway cars, Klara paints old B-52s; Sister Edgar twins J. Edgar; a clip of a murder by the Texas Highway Killer prefigures a viewing of the Zapruder film of the Kennedy assassination. Public and private intertwine; the half-remembered fades into the wholly imagined. A nun in a burned-out ghetto screams at a busload of gawking foreign tourists: "Brussels is surreal. Milan is surreal. This is real. The Bronx is real." Periodically, DeLillo shows us our forgotten brethren, those who happened to live, figuratively or literally, downwind from the blast — the tortured damned of a Brueghel painting and the deformed experimental subjects in Eisenstein's movie, the lost souls of the barrio, the victims of atomic radiation in Kazakhstan.

But "everything's connected". Searching for the Thomson baseball, obsessive Marvin Lundy examines old photographs and bits of movie film, enlarging details, patiently studying the very pixels. "All knowledge is available if you analyze the dots." One eventually discovers that Underworld operates as a kind of hypertext, a never-ending series of narrative links.

Of all these, the sections set in the early 1950s possess a particular magic. The opening 60 pages thrillingly recreate that final game of the 1951 pennant race. The account of Nick's cocky adolescence seems like the purest Americana, to use the word with which DeLillo presciently titled his first novel. Appropriately Nick's part of Underworld ends with a paragraph redolent of loss and desire, echoing Whitman, recalling Gatsby. Nearing retirement, enjoying a comfortable life and a successful career, Nick yearns for his youth: "I long for the days of disorder. I want them back, the days when I was alive on the earth, rippling in the quick of my skin, heedless and real. I was dumb-muscled and angry and real. This is what I long for, the breach of peace, the days of disarray when I walked real streets and did things slap-bang and felt angry and ready all the time, a danger to others and a distant mystery to myself."

Last spring Thomas Pynchon brought out Mason & Dixon. This fall we have DeLillo's Underworld. Can you imagine the headache for the judges of the year's literary awards? Let 'em agonize. The rest of us can just read and rejoice.



James Michener: promoted the world as an exciting place

View From Olympia

OBITUARY
James Michener

HERE'S how to get to my house, James Michener said: Go past the gas station and turn left at the mini-mart, turn left again at the second traffic light. It's the third house, a ranch-style place. Can't miss it.

Could too. I drove around Austin, dazed by the number of gas stations, mini-marts and ranch houses. Surely one of the most successful American writers of all time lived in something a bit more impressive than a ranch house in Texas?

Nope. Michener's dwelling appeared indistinguishable from that of his fellow suburbanites. If anything, it was probably plainer. He didn't seem interested in the most basic modern amenities, saving soap chips to make shaving cream and using an ancient Olympia typewriter. This frugality became even clearer when we took a break. "Want some orange juice?" he asked.

Sure, I said, following him into the kitchen. He opened a cupboard and took out a can. Michener's fellow suburbanites were buying cartons of Tropicana Pure Premium Homestyle or they had their own juicers, but the writer was still pouring his stuff out of these big cans that looked like depth charges left over from World War II, and tasted as if they had been around about that long.

Michener began life as an orphan whose adoptive mother was so destitute that she had to send him to the local poorhouse for weeks at a time. The thrift that was necessity in his early years later became a way of life. In his universe, objects didn't count.

Neither did money. By the time Michener died last week at the age of 90, he had given as much as $100 million to museums, writing programs and other worthy institutions. Many wealthy people leave their fortunes to charity, but Michener saw no point in waiting.

He wrote 40 books that sold in excess of 75 million copies. The most famous was Tales Of The South Pacific, which yielded a Pulitzer Prize and a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, but his reputation really rests on about 10 books that seek to encompass the areas they describe, including Iberia, Alaska, Texas, Hawaii, Chesapeake, The Source (about the Holy Land), Centennial (the West) and The Covenant (South Africa).

During the heyday of the American century, Michener was the quintessential American best seller. His books were earnest, competently written, lavishly researched and liberal in the best sense: They promoted the idea that the world was an exciting place, and that anyone who bothered to investigate a culture would find it not only interesting but sympathetic.

Even now, 38 years after it appeared, Hawaii is the enduring work of fiction on the island. Is your 70-year-old father or 17-year-old daughter going there for the first time? The book will probably be in a travel bag, to be read on the plane and then the beach, and it will pleasurably teach the island's history.

Michener knew that to understand the present you had to go to the past. After a short prologue, The Covenant gets underway by reeling back centuries: "In the year 1453 after Christ, the effective history of South Africa began by actions occurring at a most unlikely spot."

And frequently, he went far back indeed. The beginning of Alaska: "About a billion years ago . . ."

His tomes might have covered eons, but the author never expected them to last more than a few seasons. "I have always felt with each of my big books that 10 or 15 years later some smart young fella or girl would come along and redo the basic story," he recently told a reporter. "And that ought to have happened. Hawaii should have been rewritten from the point of view of a Japanese immigrant and Poland should have been rewritten by a Jew battling prejudices."

NO ONE ever has done those books, probably because writing on this scale is enormously difficult. Research by novelists is out of fashion, and so is the exploration of non-Anglo cultures; a glance at the current best-seller list merely confirms this. Although Michener has a couple of imitators, there are no true successors.

He was always popular but never fashionable, and was often mocked by the literary mandarins as being hopelessly suburban and a bad writer to boot. These charges bothered him but he consoled himself with his sales figures and admiring comments from readers.

Asked how he wanted to be remembered, Michener replied: "By that row of solid books that rest on library shelves throughout the world." As long as people continue to go to the places Michener wrote about, those shelves will remain.

David Streitfeld

James Michener, novelist, born February 3, 1907; died October 16, 1997

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
October 26 1997

Kohl launches bid for another term

Arnaud Leparmentier in Leipzig

AFTER being challenged from within the ranks of his own Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, tried on October 13 to reunite the party by launching a fierce attack on his opponents in the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

With less than a year to go before the general election, scheduled for September 27, 1998, Kohl told 1,000 delegates at the CDU conference in Leipzig how little he thought of the performance of the two potential SPD candidates for the chancellorship, Oskar Lafontaine and Gerhard Schröder.

He said that in their capacity as minister presidents of Saarland and Lower Saxony respectively, "they share the distinction of having the worst track record of any minister presidents in Germany". Kohl's 90-minute speech marked the beginning of the election campaign.

Kohl reiterated his resolutely optimistic economic credo: "Contrary to a widely held prejudice, globalisation will result in a considerable number of new jobs."

In another swipe at the SPD, he said: "We're banking on new jobs through innovation and growth. The SPD simply wants to share out the available work. We want social justice. The SPD wants to level everything out."

After being dismissed as having no chance at next year's election, Kohl has made up some political ground since the summer. The Hamburg regional elections on September 21 marked a setback for the SPD.

What is more, the chancellor has improved his relations with his coalition partner, the small Free Democratic Party (FDP), by knocking two percentage points off the solidarity tax that has been helping to finance the reconstruction of eastern Germany.

In his Leipzig speech, Kohl once again exploited his statesmanlike qualities as the guarantor of peace, European man and father of German unity. He reiterated his belief in the euro, which he said would be introduced at the right time and in accordance with the Maastricht criteria.

But Kohl is unlikely to make Europe a central plank of his election campaign, as his entourage suggested last summer. The principle of a single currency is no longer the subject of any serious debate in Germany. The decisions on the euro will have already been taken in May 1998, more than four months before the general election.

Kohl will have to base his campaign on domestic political issues, such as the modernisation of Germany as it enters a new millennium. However, there are those within the CDU who doubt that Kohl is the right man for the job.

Klaus Escher, the 32-year-old president of the Junge Union (young Christian Democrats), announced before the party conference that he thought the chancellor — after a 24-year stint as party president — should step down after the 1998 election.

Although he was slapped down by party grandees, Escher, like other ambitious young Christian Democrats, had raised a very real question: will the man who reunited Germany be able to introduce the reforms needed by a single currency? On that there are grave doubts, judging from Kohl's record in office, which contrasts sharply with the content of his speeches.

The chancellor is finding it extremely difficult to show that his government has achieved anything of significance during its term of office. Germany has 4.3 million unemployed, and 20 per cent of east Germans are out of a job.

Kohl has not made any concrete suggestions as to how to solve the problem. He thinks he has done what is necessary by creating conditions that are conducive to job creation (he has pushed through privatisations, cut sickness benefits, slashed taxes, and made it easier for companies to offer fixed-term job contracts and make redundancies).

"It's time to take on new staff" was his simple message to companies. If such essential reforms, like that of the tax system, have proved a failure, it is, he says, the fault of the SPD, which controls the Bundesrat (the upper house), whose members are appointed by Germany's Länder (states).

Kohl and his party seem to have run out of ideas. They are seeking refuge in the basics of Christian Democratic dogma. In the speech he gave after the ecumenical service which, as always, opened the conference, the chancellor harked back to the Christian ethos of his party. "It is not some outdated relic; it remains our greatest strength, and is today more important than ever."

He regretted that children no longer knew their prayers as well as they used to and, in passing, paid tribute to the army: "We can be proud of our soldiers."

(October 15)

Violence in Colombia threatens elections

Anne Proenza in Bogotá

IN THE run-up to Colombia's local elections on October 26, several leading political and business figures have called on President Ernesto Samper to resign "in the name of peace". The government claims it is all a plot, while the Liberal party, to which Samper belongs, is increasingly divided over the issue.

Colombia, which has suffered a terrible wave of violence over the past few months, is bracing itself for a difficult poll, which will elect new mayors, governors and regional councillors. Both the Marxist guerrillas and the rightwing paramilitary groups are determined to sabotage the elections and are waging a war on the ground.

Two weeks before the poll, 1,300 candidates had already stood down in the face of death threats; 33 others had been murdered and more than 200 kidnapped. In at least 87 municipalities there will be no election because there are no candidates.

To ensure the poll does take place, the government has said it will mobilise 120,000 troops and bring in international observers. Several times since the beginning of the year Samper's government has made peace offers to the country's various armed groups.

But the last offer, which came at the end of August, was followed by a major strike against the guerrillas by the Colombian army. For two weeks the air force bombarded an area in the south of the country in an attempt — unsuccessful as it happened — to dislodge the leaders of the main guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc).

Against this background of civil war, there seems little hope of a credible peace offer being made. The high-powered National Conciliation Commission, which was set up two years ago at the initiative of the Roman Catholic Church, has been busy putting out feelers to the various parties in the conflict.

The Farc and the other main guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), together constitute a force of around 15,000 men. The rebels control 40 per cent of the country. They have said more than once that they will not negotiate with the government of Samper, whose term of office ends next August.

That being the case, a Liberal party candidate in next year's presidential election, Juan Manuel Santos, has asked the government to stay on the sidelines of the peace process. In making that request, he has the support of several sectors of civilian society.

Santos, who has also been in contact with guerrilla and paramilitary groups in the past few months, said this month that a peace agreement could be rapidly concluded if Mr Samper resigned and handed over power to Vice-President Carlos Lemos.

According to Santos, the Farc wants a constituent assembly to be called and large areas of the country demilitarised. In return, it says it is prepared to accept an immediate ceasefire.

The paramilitary groups belonging to the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia announced on October 13 that they were in favour of a constituent assembly being convoked and would be prepared to halt fighting if the guerrillas ceased their military operations.

Santos's proposal has received broad support from the Catholic Church hierarchy, many business leaders and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The government claims it is yet another ploy aimed at bringing down Samper or destabilising the campaign of Horacio Serpa, a former interior minister and another Liberal contender for the presidency next year. Serpa has based his campaign policy on the urgent need to end the civil war that is devastating the country.

The current interior minister, Carlos Holmes Trujillo, has stressed that "no Colombian could, without the government, pledge to demilitarise any part of the country". Several political analysts believe that it is only in the long term that a peace process has any chance of getting off the ground.

However, the idea of calling a constituent assembly representing all sections of Colombian society and all those involved in the civil war, on both the guerrilla and the paramilitary sides, is fast gaining ground.

● Three members of the peace community of San José de Apartado, in the northwestern region of Uraba, were killed last week *writes Jeremy Lennard in Bogotá*.

Less than two weeks after celebrating the community's six-month anniversary, one of its leaders, Ramiro Correa, and two colleagues were shot in cold blood, apparently by the Farc, for refusing to sell food to the armed gang.

Despite its stance of active neutrality, the village of San José is vulnerable without an international presence to keep the gunmen at bay.

(October 15)

Divisions over 35-hour week

EDITORIAL

THREE days after the social summit meeting of government ministers, employers and trade union representatives on October 10, which resulted in a decision to phase in a 35-hour week by 2000, Jean Gandois stepped down from his job as president of the employers' federation, the CNPF.

His resignation marks the first failure of what has come to be known as the "Jospin method". The consensus-seeking approach that the French prime minister, Lionel Jospin, has successfully and profitably adopted up to now failed on this occasion.

Just as Jospin was trying to move on from political dialogue within his own party to social dialogue with trade unions and employers, the machine seems to have seized up. Worse, it has become untrustworthy — Gandois complained that he had been "tricked" and "manipulated".

Every effort was made to ensure that Gandois' resignation from the CNPF — triggered by the organisation's internal politics — would cause as much damage as possible to the prime minister and government.

Rightwing leaders were quick to seize on his decision as proof not only that Jospin's approach had been ineffectual, but that he was a prime minister who could not be trusted.

After three years of trying to persuade employers of the need for a new approach to industrial relations, Gandois suggested that someone with a "killer" instinct would be better qualified to wage the war against the 35-hour week.

The right feels the need to close ranks, faced as it is with a government that is more highly regarded than its predecessor not only by wage-earners — which is only to be expected — but by employers.

With Gandois's resignation, the CNPF executive can be brought to heel by the "warlords", who nurse the same ambitions as the politicians who lost the general election in June, namely that the right will return to power.

The government is facing a challenge. Not only has the genuineness of its method of engaging in dialogue been called into question, but doubts have been cast on its ability to reconcile its response to the expectations of wage-earners with its support for economic competition.

What Gandois seemed to be saying when he threw in the towel was that behind the government's realism there lurked an inflexibility or a short-sightedness that was bad for the economy.

Most company bosses have refused to accept an imposed reduction in working hours. The government did plan a gradual phasing in of the 35-hour week, which could be negotiated and reviewed. But the setting of a deadline overshadowed its pragmatism and enabled Gandois's opponents in the CNPF to convince the organisation that the October 10 talks had been unproductive.

The government can now respond to that criticism by demonstrating that it is the right and the employers who have adopted an "ideological" stance.

(October 15)

Crime casts long shadow over India's business capital

Françoise Chipaux in Bombay

"BOMBAY has become like Chicago in the twenties and thirties — the mafia controls every aspect of our lives." Although a trifle alarmist, this remark by a businessman reflects the mounting unease that has gripped India's economic capital. The wealthy, who are the mafia's main targets, began to panic after the murder of two leading businessmen in August.

"Extortion is nothing new in Bombay," says A A Khan, a former police officer who runs a security agency. "But the mafia has now cast its net much wider, and the sums involved are much greater." An earlier generation of gangsters exhausted the possibilities of trafficking, gambling and prostitution; their successors took an interest in property — an unlimited source of wealth in Bombay — then in the film industry. They are now turning their attention to anyone who has money, including those in the professions.

"It's not a good idea to flaunt your wealth," says Sujata, a young woman lawyer. "If you buy a car or a house, or even redecorate your house, 'they' know all about it. They call you, and either you pay up or find a bigger fish who is prepared to protect you."

Most people under threat prefer not to inform the police. The two men gunned down in August had each received precise financial demands, accompanied by threats. But neither told the police about them.

A group of Bombay residents said, in an unsigned letter to several newspapers, that they did not trust the police and were afraid they would tip off the gangsters. As one policeman admits: "It's obvious that certain officers have contacts with the mafia."

Urged by New Delhi to restore the rule of law or be dissolved, the state government of Maharashtra, of which Bombay is the capital, appointed a new police chief and sacked 19 officers at the end of August. The new boss said he was prepared to wipe out the gangsters and called on blackmail victims to co-operate with the police.

Within days, around 10 gangsters were killed by police, who were not too fussy about the methods they used, apparently to the satisfaction of most of Bombay's inhabitants. Restoring people's trust in the police will take time, and it is widely felt that priority should be given to depoliticising the force and giving its bosses *carte blanche* to act as they wish.

One newspaper columnist wondered how the police could possibly act when the Shiv Shena (the extremist Hindu party that governs Bombay with the Hindu nationalists of the Bharatiya Janata party) was itself a gang. He pointed out that all political parties had used gangsters to settle scores.

In an article entitled "Is Bombay turning into Chicago?" B G Deshmukh, a former senior civil servant, argued that the criminalisation of the political community was the main cause of the present situation.

"Most of those who have been murdered so far had connections with the mafia," says one policeman off the record. K D Shorey, general-secretary of the Bollywood Producers' Association (Bollywood is India's "Hollywood" in Bombay), does not deny that certain leading film industry figures are in contact with gangsters. "But the scale of the whole thing should not be exaggerated," he says.

However, in less than six months, two leading Bollywood figures have been killed, another one escaped an assassination attempt, and a dozen more have received threats.

"When you remember that only 15 per cent of the 800 Indian movies produced annually — 125 of them in Bombay — make money, you wonder how cinema is financed," says a critic. "It's obvious that cinema is a convenient money-laundering outlet for the mafia."

The panic that has gripped Bombay is good news for the security agencies, which have been mushrooming in the city. Khan, who started up his company in 1996, already has a staff of 700 — armed and unarmed bodyguards he rents out for between $500 and $1,300 a month. "Demand has shot up in the past month, and I get an increasing number of panic-stricken people bursting into my office," he says.

Khan, who once ran the city's anti-terrorist squad, thinks the only effective solution to the problem would be for the government to fight poverty seriously. Bombay, where 60 of India's 100 largest companies are located, continues to attract daily almost 1,000 have-nots in search of a job. "Seventy per cent of young people living in the shanty towns are unemployed. They form an inexhaustible reservoir for the mafia," he says.

"Business does not seem to have been affected for the moment," says an economist. "But obviously if the situation were to get worse, this would have repercussions on an already sluggish economy."

(October 10)



People powered . . . Bombay goes about its daily business, but an increasing fear of the 'mafia' could have repercussions on India's economy PHOTOGRAPH DEVIS TIOFF

Brave pledge of Malicounda

Women in a Senegalese village have come out against genital mutilation, writes **Roland-Pierre Paringaux** in Malicounda

FATOU CISSOKO, the youngest of the women gathered under the village's mango tree, did not mince her words: "I now know what my rights are, and I know my body belongs to me. I'll never force my daughter to undergo the mutilations I suffered as a baby."

Maïmouna Traoré, the oldest in the group, said: "Whatever price we have to pay, there's no question of backtracking now. For us, circumcision is already a thing of the past."

In July, the women of Malicounda, a village in Senegal, flew in the face of tradition by publicly saying no to female circumcision — or more properly female genital mutilation (FGM) — which girls in some ethnic groups have suffered for centuries. It was an unheard-of step. Since then, the "Malicounda pledge" has spread like wildfire throughout the region.

Malicounda's 3,000 inhabitants are mostly Bambaras from Mali. It is one of several Bambara villages in a region where FGM is practised. But it has been affected by changing attitudes. Families in the Senegalese capital, Dakar, which is an hour's drive away, eventually abandoned FGM, a custom that now solely reflects a desire to control women's sexuality by mutilating them.

Not so long ago the villagers of Malicounda still clung stubbornly to their traditions in the face of Senegal's dominant Wolof culture.

FGM was so deeply embedded in their traditions that those who refused to have their daughters mutilated ran the risk, the moment they turned their backs, of their aunt or grandmother whisking her off to the "circumciser". Similarly, when a Bambara man married a woman from a community with different customs, his parents would do everything they could to get their daughter-in-law circumcised.

Doussou Konaté has an adopted daughter: "Her family didn't go in for circumcision, and I decided not to force the ordeal on her. But when she was about 10 she began to be sneered at by children her age. One boy publicly branded her as 'unclean'. She was told she'd never find a husband. For months she'd come home in tears, begging me to get her circumcised so she could be 'like the others'." In the end Konaté gave in. Overnight her daughter was able to fit into the community. Now 17, she is about to get married.

The initiatory rite that involved the collective FGM of teenagers was gradually superseded in the seventies by the imposition of the practice on increasingly younger girls. But women were convinced that they were following an Islamic precept, and that, just like an uncircumcised man, an uncircumcised woman was "unclean".

It is a practice that still affects about 1 million women, a fifth of Senegal's female population. The operation is practised on girls between six months and 16, and can take two forms — FGM proper (removal of the clitoris), which is the more common, and the much more brutal infibulation (extensive removal of the genitals and stitching together of the labia to close the vagina), which used to be carried out in Malicounda.

The operation, performed with a razor and without an anaesthetic, lasts 20 minutes. Girls are held down and must not complain — if they do they bring shame on their family. Marriage, often at an early age, is equally painful. "If the man is experienced, he can open his wife himself," says Konaté. "But mostly he has to call in the circumciser."

There is a persistent belief that the operation is harmless despite the traumas, haemorrhages, infections, sexual malfunctions and deaths during childbirth that frequently ensue. These are put down to "bad luck".

Since 1996, 39 women in Malicounda have taken part in a basic education programme devised by the international organisation Tostan, with the support of Unicef and the Senegalese government. Spread over several years, it consists of a series of "modules" aimed at helping the underprivileged to look after themselves. Module 7, which touched on such sensitive issues as women's sexuality and the right to control their bodies, got off to a good start.

But when the Wolof co-ordinator, Ndeye Maguette Diop, brought up the subject of FGM, her group of women suddenly started behaving differently. "They refused to take part and started talking in Bambara, a language that I don't understand," she says.

She continued to talk about the issue for several days, eventually making a breakthrough: first one woman, then another, agreed to answer her questions. Soon they were all comparing notes.

"When a tradition is dangerous, you have to give it up," says Oureye Sali, who came from a neighbouring village to give moral support to her Malicounda "sisters". She knows what she is talking about. For years she helped her mother to perform FGM, and was due to take over from her. One day, her mother circumcised Sali's own daughter, causing a serious haemorrhage. The girl only just survived. That made Sali decide not to follow in her mother's footsteps.

In addition to such considerations as women's rights and public health, there was the religious notion that an uncircumcised woman was unclean and therefore unworthy to share the home of a believer. To everyone's surprise, the village imam, Amadou Touré, ruled that FGM was not an obligation and said he had not had it carried out on his daughters. That caused barriers to fall.

"It was a great moment," says Diop. The "rebels" realised the scale of their achievement, but did not want to give the impression they were defying tradition. They organised public debates and put on a play. Soon husbands and local dignitaries came round to their way of thinking.

While some other villages have been influenced by what happened in Malicounda, there has also been resistance. One old woman still thinks that "circumcision makes a woman more of a woman and therefore more beautiful". In the nearby town of M'bour, rumours started that the Malicounda women were flouting tradition and propagating foreign ideas.

The Senegalese government has been keeping a low profile on the issue. This contrasts with its official stance. Senegal's minister for women and children, Aminata Mbengue Ndiaye, says she is "more determined than ever to eradicate female circumcision".

But Sidiki Kaba, president of Senegal's national human rights organisation, points out that his country has still not brought its domestic legislation into line with the international texts it has officially ratified: "At national level there is virtually no specific action resulting in tangible results as regards FGM, despite various declarations of intent." Those who practise it enjoy total impunity. "The only hope is that change will come from the grassroots, as it has in Malicounda."

According to the World Health Organisation, FGM goes on in 28 countries in Africa and the Middle East, and it puts the total number of women and girls who have suffered such practices at 130 million.

(October 14)

Tony Claydon visits three institutions engaged in rapid change in South Africa

Suffering pangs of rebirth

A *STONE'S* throw from the centre of Johannesburg, the University of the Witwatersrand straddles the main motorway. Wits has had a troubled history because it has always sought not to discriminate racially in its student intake, a policy in direct conflict with the apartheid government.

The university offered a kind of sanctuary to students who took part in ANC-led protests against the quality of education in the townships, while the police demanded they be expelled. Violence erupted on campus and police charged groups of students and made arrests.

Some white liberal academics are dismayed that, more recently, the university has become the target of black protest against its exclusion of students for non-payment of fees and the allegedly slow pace of transformation.

Transformation is the process of radically changing the culture and practices of higher education institutions to redress discrimination that created separate universities for different races and generally provided inferior education for blacks.

At Wits the first-year intake is now 61 per cent black. Attempts to strike a fairer balance among the staff have been frustrated by the loss of many of Wit's black academics to government ministries and commerce — a familiar tale in South African universities.

Despite protests, it would be wrong to assume transformation has failed here. In 1993, the university and an alliance of groups committed to greater democracy in higher education formed the Forum for Further Accelerated and Comprehensive Transformation.

It was charged with reaching decisions through negotiation, consultation and consensus, and includes representatives of 19 internal and external constituencies. Even so, about half the membership is white and male.

There is a need for policies to provide more effective support for some black students who have been poorly educated in township schools and who experience drop-out rates of up to 40 per cent, or who may take six years to graduate. Beyond that, Wits needs to nurture a new generation of black academics by enabling them to move into postgraduate work and providing them with pedagogic training.

North of Johannesburg, beyond Pretoria, at Soshanguve, with its poor shops and earthen footpaths, you turn a corner and you are at the security gate of Technikon Northern Transvaal. TNT appears so incongruous that it might have been deposited randomly by an alien culture — and so it was, as a product of the apartheid regime. The government provided a pleasant campus, which opened in 1980.

As with many other so-called historically black institutions, all the students at TNT are black and most staff are white. The students pushed for black managers, who would identify more closely with their needs and once physically ejected the former white vice-chancellor.

Now, the vice-chancellor and two of the three pro-vice-chancellors are black but their appointments have not averted campus unrest. Students have looted the kitchens because of inadequate catering, and there have been recent cases of rape on campus.

TNT has a Broad Transformation Forum but it seems to have accomplished little, perhaps partly due to uncertainty as to what transformation means in this historically black institution compared with white institutions where an increase in black students is the most obvious, tangible sign. However, TNT is changing rapidly in other respects: intake has risen by an average 23 per cent per year since 1990. The past failure rate of nearly 60 per cent has been cut to 25 per cent.

But racial divides still exist — the local township is black only, no white staff members live nearby and there are no white students on campus during evenings and weekends.

At Port Elizabeth Technikon, an historically Afrikaans institution, it was decided in 1988 that it should become non-discriminatory. Since then, the student population has trebled and the percentage of non-white students has risen five-fold. Even so, many black students face an uphill struggle. Typically, they are members of single-parent families living in small houses on the edge of town, who experience extreme hardship.

Children are expected to assist with household chores, including child care, and have little time for study. Their schools may have totally inadequate facilities and hopelessly high pupil-teacher ratios.

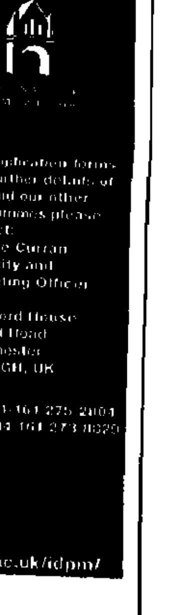
Many such students experience the Technikon as an alien European culture, which, somehow, they have to engage with. Young Xhosa men may be seen working at computers wearing their traditional costume and red face paint associated with tribal initiation rites and yet, despite the difficulties they encounter, some are highly talented and excel themselves.

This year, some classes at PET are, for the first time, entirely black, and in some engineering subjects there are more black women than white men. But much remains to be done in terms of the staff profile so the state of transformation varies.

Many of the formerly Afrikaans institutions such as Port Elizabeth Technikon assert a new commitment to redress that is initiated — some might say imposed — from the top and largely accepted by a politically docile student body.

Some of the liberal, English universities have a longer history of non-discrimination and in recent years have progressed more slowly, having to respond to challenges from more demonstrative students.

Under apartheid Wits university was the scene for ANC-led protests by students over poor education provision for blacks PHOTO GIDEON MANDEL



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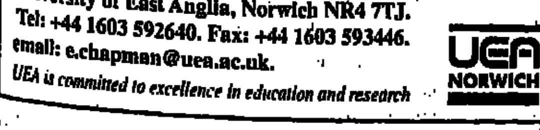
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Essential requirements for this position include:

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- Gender-aware management, administration and human resource development experience, preferably with non-governmental organizations.
- Willingness to travel frequently, sometimes to remote areas.
- Good communication, reporting and negotiating skills in English.
- Commitment to Oxfam's goals.

Knowledge of Chinese would be highly desirable. Current salary scale is HK$38,500-$44,677 per month.

Please send your application and C.V. to the Assistant to the Director, Oxfam Hong Kong, 9/F1. 191 Woosung Street, Jordan, Kowloon, Hong Kong or by fax to 2527-6307. Closing date for applications: 5 November 1997. Interviews will be held in HK on 26-28 November.

Eastern Africa Regional Office



Technical Advisor
District Environmental Planning
Mt Elgon Conservation and Development Project, Phase 111

The Eastern Africa Regional Office Of IUCN - The World Conservation Union seeks to recruit a Technical Advisor, District Environmental Planning to work with the Mt Elgon Conservation and Development Project in Uganda, a project supporting the Uganda Wildlife Authority and the Ministry of Natural Resources. The oject aims to conserve the biodiversity of Mt Elgon National Park and promote sustainable development initiatives in communities adjacent to the National Park to alleviate pressure on park resources.

The Technical Advisor will play a catalytic and facilitating role, by placing emphasis on strengthening capacity within District Administration staff, to formulate and implement sub-county and district environmental plans. Environmental plans will be based on the state of the district resource base, address environmental degradation processes, and introduce a strategy for sustainable natural resource use which conserves the natural resources while addressing the development needs of the District.

The candidate must have a relevant postgraduate degree and at least seven years relevant professional experience. He/she should have:

- demonstrated expertise and experience in land use planning, natural resource assessment and management, and environmental monitoring
- demonstrated expertise and experience in participatory approaches to planning
- an understanding of environmental economics and Government development planning
- demonstrated ability to identify training needs and to plan and implement participatory training and extension programs.
- excellent communication skills
- familiarity with working in the developing world, preferably in Africa
- demonstrated capacity to work as part of a multidisciplinary team
- experience and skills in database management and analysis

The DEPA is a two-year position based in the Mt. Elgon Conservation and Development Project office in Mbale.

Applicants should send letters of application, detailed curriculum vitae and names of three professional referees to: The Regional Representative, IUCN Eastern Africa Regional Office, P.O. Box 68200, Nairobi, Kenya or fax 252 2 890615 by 5th November, 1997. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

DRUG SCHEME PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATOR FOR ALL BNMT IN NEPAL

The Britain-Nepal Medical Trust is a well established non-governmental organisation working in Nepal's Eastern region with government and non-government partners in the fields of tuberculosis control, essential drug supplies and community health. It employs 150 staff and has an annual budget of £400,000.

The DSP Co-ordinator is responsible for the planning, implementation and evaluation of BNMT's Drug Scheme Programme and for defining overall programme direction. This includes developing proposed new areas of work at the community level. The Co-ordinator also represents the DSP in meetings with government officials and other organisations, and is responsible for training BNMT staff and others in drug supply management and rational drug use. The post involves a good deal of travelling from the base in Biratnagar and is managed by BNMT's country Director.

Qualifications:	Medical doctor or pharmacist
Experience:	Previous experience of essential drugs supply, programme management and working with communities in developing countries.
Skills:	Good communicator and team worker, computer literate.

If necessary Nepali language training would be provided prior to taking up the 3 year contract from March/April 1998. The starting salary is £11,300. Benefits include accommodation and home leave flight.

An application form and job description are available from:-
B.N.M.T., 16 East Street, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1HG. UK,
Tel: 44 (0) 1732 360284
Fax: 44 (0)1732 363876,
E-Mail 106133.2134@compuserve.com

Closing date for applications, 14 November 1997.
Interviews to be held mid December 1997.



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- Project manager (Kabul), a clinician or epidemiologist to coordinate the leishmaniasis control and treatment services. Available from March 1998
- Programme director (Peshawar), to coordinate the various control and research projects. Available from March 1998.

HealthNet International is an NGO that provides health care in the aftermath of crisis, between the phases of emergency relief and sustainable development.

Qualifications: An appropriate health degree, overseas managerial experience, experience in the control of vector borne disease is desirable.

For further information and job descriptions contact: Judith Zael, HealthNet International, Singel 540, 1017 AZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Tel: (31) 20 420 1115 Fax: (31) 20 4 20 1503. e-mail: Judith@hnl.nl.

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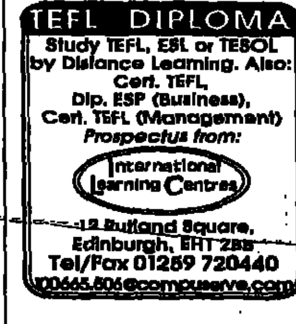
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NUTRITION OFFICER - Dublin based
HEALTH OFFICER - Dublin based

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Applicants should have a minimum of three years experience in emergency health/nutrition projects in an NGO setting. The Nutrition Officer will hold a primary degree in nutrition or dietetics. The Health Officer will hold a primary Medical/Health Science Degree or hold a SRN/RGN qualification. Both posts require excellent interpersonal, report writing and training skills in addition to being computer literate. Applicants should have the ability to cope with the traumas of emergency work and be willing to be deployed to emergency programmes at very short notice.

For further information please contact Deirdre Rigby, Telephone 00-353-1-4754162, Fax 00-353-1-4754649 E-mail deirdre.rigby@concern... Closing date for applications is Friday 14 November 1997.

Center Director

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TO APPLY: Send a detailed letter explaining research experience, interests and skills, CV with names and telephone numbers of 3 references to:

Trudy Cullen
Center Director Search
The School for Field Studies
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Send resume and cover letter to e-mail and all faxes to 212-551-3170.

Still in thrall to paper power

Global demand for paper shows no sign of ending, reports **David Harrison**

"*THE* paperless office?" said the paper industry man. "About as much chance as the paperless toilet."

The computer age was supposed to herald the arrival of the "paperless office", but after 15 years of desktop computers we are using more paper than ever — 11.5 million tonnes in the United Kingdom last year, a big rise on the 8.7 million of a decade ago.

The evidence is all around us. Office computers lie buried under a mountain of paper, faxes, photocopies, newspapers, magazines and paper cups. It will get worse: offices are using 6 per cent more paper every year.

But the "experts" told us we would be working in pristine, paper-free environments, that everything would be electronic and tidy — paper was passé. One technocrat predicted paper-free offices by 1990. Wrong.

In fact, the cause of this paper explosion is the very technology that was supposed to make paper redundant. Fax machines cannot work without paper. Personal computers — 3.3 million were sold in the UK last year, 500,000 in 1987 — come with printers, so we can print out everything on the screen.

We photocopy everything, and now we can do it in colour. But we copy only the top right-hand corner first time, so we do it again and again until we get it right.

Mobile phones, credit cards and store cards generate bills, all on paper of course. We print out e-mail messages and long screeds dredged up from websites.

We buy more, bigger, newspapers and magazines than before. "There is so much more information available and a huge demand for access to it," said a spokesman for Apple Computer.

Much of the information is unwanted but forced through our letterboxes anyway. The insurance broker, the window cleaner and the pizza man all use "junk mail" to sell their services. Last year more than 3 billion "direct mail" items were sent to British households, a 126 per cent increase in 10 years.

Cary Cooper, employment psychologist at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, says people do not trust electronic communications. "They don't always arrive, and when they do we can never be sure who will have access to it," he said, his desk littered with printed-out e-mail. "We feel more confident about a letter sent in a sealed, personally addressed envelope."

There is also a "touchy-feely" element to paper, says Cooper. "It's more real, more personal, particularly when you think of important letters. I think you'd feel cheated if you were informed by e-mail that you'd been awarded an MBE."

Humans are great hoarders, too. "People like to keep letters, documents and other papers." Paper documents are also kept as back-up. Electronic records are not enough. Companies now send out the same information by e-mail, fax and, just to be sure, by post.

Archivists at the Public Record Office are worried that, without paper copies, historical data will be lost because the discs on which it is kept are usable only with computers that will become obsolete.

Some areas are simply sacrosanct. Book sales remain unaffected by the march of computers. Only the most devoted anorak would settle down in front of a screen to read a classic. Even computer firms are convinced that paper will always be part of office life — that's why they still make printers. However, Don Norman, vice-president of advanced technology at Apple Computer, predicts a society that will be "80 per cent paperless" by 2009.

Rank Xerox's chief executive, Bernard Fournier, believes the paperless office will probably happen "ultimately" but not for some while. "All our research tells us that people are still committed to paper and that the use of electronic documents is incremental."

Rank's research team is working on products including a copier that can take documents in one language and reproduce them in others, and a form of "virtual paper" that can be re-used endlessly.

Paper has already almost disappeared from some offices. The London Stock Exchange has been *sans papier* since a computer system was introduced in 1996. Banks, hospitals, police stations, courts, job centres and car auctions are all trying to reduce paper use in the drive for efficiency.

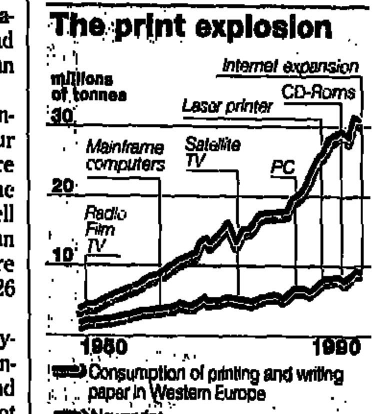
It is not enough. Environmentalists argue that paper consumption — which has trebled worldwide since 1967 and is predicted to grow by 50 per cent by 2010 — is already unsustainable and will have a profound impact on communities, climate, plants and wildlife.

The soaring demand for paper — and the huge profits to be made from it — has contributed to many horrors in the timber industry: wholesale logging and clearing of rainforests; poor replanting; replacement of hardwoods with lucrative crops or fast-growing and ecologically-damaging softwoods.

Green groups want to see strict controls on the timber and paper industries and more paper recycling. Britain recycles about 35 per cent of its paper, well behind Germany (56 per cent), the Netherlands (55 per cent) and Japan (52 per cent).

British industry could help. Half its imported paper comes from Scandinavia where natural forests have made way for intensively-managed plantations, threatening ancient flora and fauna.

The print explosion



Source: Jaakko Pöyry Consulting

Too much monk business . . . one of the men-only monasteries

Women are barred from Mount Athos in northern Greece. **Helena Smith** reports on a Byzantine plot

Republic of men

IN 1045, the Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus decided he would ban women from a craggy little peninsula in northern Greece. This was to be a holy place, he ruled: a quiet, contemplative enclave hidden from the material world, where men with substantial facial hair could contemplate the Virgin Mary and, by meditating on the beautiful landscape of Mount Athos, commune better with God.

Monomachus had been inspired to set up the Ayiou Oros, or Holy Mount, by the legendary story that the Virgin Mary was blown ashore on Athos while travelling to Cyprus, where, the story goes, a voice consecrated the place in her name. Since then, little has changed. The edict that Monomachus issued in the 11th century, signed in red ink, banning "every woman, every female animal, every child, eunuch and clean-faced person" from Mount Athos still holds. The closest women can get to the republic is on boats which sail down the peninsula, but which are forbidden from straying within 500 metres of the coast.

This is particularly ironic since many of the remarkable Byzantine treasures — icons, altar panels and paintings — that adorn the 20 monasteries and hermitages depict the Virgin Mary. Until this summer, no women had seen any of these triumphs of religious art. Until, that is, some of the treasures were transported to Salonica for a show called The Treasures Of Mount Athos, a one-off exhibition of extraordinary Byzantine art which is part of the celebration for the northern Greek capital's selection as European City of Culture. After the show closes at the end of the year, who knows how many millennia will pass before women are allowed to see them again?

The all-male Mount has lived in thrall to the Mother of Christ since its establishment. This is Her garden, the guides tell you, and on it She is protector, guardian and muse — a life force for the 4,000 Greek, Russian, Serbian and Bulgarian male Orthodox Christians who now see themselves as the custodians of the world's last medieval colony.

For Mount Athos is just that. It still adheres to Byzantine time, with days beginning at sunset (by 8am the monks are downing the first of many a glass of wine) and, thanks to the Julian calendar, it still remains 13 days behind the outside world.

The mobile phone, computer and fax machine have recently reached the shores of the self-governing republic, but otherwise the door has been firmly shut on the modern world.

Like thousands of other women, I was to discover, through its display of treasures and the inevitable boat tour around the peninsula, that the theocratic statelet is a kind of time-warped Fairyland. It is, if your tour guides are to be believed, a world where eunuchs still exist, at least in the mind-set of most monks (sexless and hairless boys were highly prominent in Byzantium), where the "fragrant" relics of saints are revealed on request and where wonder-working icons are as common as incense.

The exhibition is the first time the insular monastic community has ever gone public. In more than a millennium, the treasure trove of priceless portable icons, altar panels and paintings has never left the Mount — and this is therefore the first time women have been able to set eyes on them. "Many of the icons had been kept in storage rooms for centuries and were unbelievably stained by candle smoke," said Giorgos Triantafillidis, the artist-architect who oversaw the mounting of the exhibition, with a sigh. "Getting the monks to part with them was no easy task."

Officially, the cultural delights are being displayed as the jewel in the crown of Salonica's otherwise low-key, year-long jamboree as Europe's cultural capital. The 1,500 artefacts, which include the formidable 12th century Serbian mosaic of Madonna and Child, have been under armed guard since they began their great descent into Greece proper.

Officially, the exhibition has a lofty aim. "The purpose of this venture", the principals of the Mount's 20 holy and benevolent monasteries proclaimed in a three-page statement, "is above all, to edify and inspire spiritually hungry modern man".

Unofficially, however, the monks are just as keen to prove their durability. In return for releasing the artistic wealth, each participating monastery stands to receive about $365,000, enough to repair their crumbling roofs and weatherbeaten hermitages. But more than money, it is the desire to keep the opposite sex at bay that has prompted the historic glimpse into the "very soul of the Holy Mountain". For increasingly, women have begun to find the republic's only female presence both problematic and provocative.



The Virgin Hodegetria . . . a 12th century Byzantine icon that women have rarely been allowed to see

Only two women, a French journalist and Oriana Fallaci, the irrepressible Italian political interviewer-cum-novelist, have got anywhere near to penetrating the peninsula. In both cases, their "smooth faces" were detected almost immediately, and so were unable to see the artefacts on Mount Athos.

Last month, the very Protestant and very female foreign ministers of Sweden and Finland vehemently refused to uphold Mount Athos's special status as an autonomous religious community at a meeting of the European Council of Ministers. They argued that the move would run contrary to the spirit of equality and freedom of movement among the member states.

The diplomatic row erupted after Greece requested that the republic's ban on "all females" should be written into the European Union's revised Maastricht treaty. Athens saw fit to make the demand after unprecedented uproar on the Mount over the government's unflinching ratification of the Schengen Accord. The pact foresees the abolition of internal frontier control and the establishment of EU databases for police and other officials by 2000.

In the three months since Greece signed the deal, scores of monks have dropped their godly pursuits to produce convoluted tracts denouncing the 15-nation bloc's "Satanic" information network, not least its plans for common identity cards.

"The government's failure to procure a protocol on the matter worries us greatly," Father Iosif, the learned abbot of the Xiropotamou monastery, boomed to me over a crackling telephone line. "The restrictions on women have to be respected, but the question is will a law court in Strasbourg now do that? If not, we might be forced to take our own measures."

Even worse for the monks, the landmark exhibition seems not only to have failed in taming female fury but to have whetted women's appetite for more. Earlier this month a prominent Greek journalist, Fotini Pipili, sent an open letter to parliament suggesting the edict should be debated in the House for the first time. Miss Pipili was, she said, encouraged by the record number flocking to see the treasures, especially the turnout of women. From all corners of the world, feminist art historians, all-women religious groups, nuns and female students have rushed to view what Sir Steven Runciman, the acclaimed Byzantine expert, described as "an unparalleled exhibition". The 12th century Virgin Hodegetria has alone, drawn thousands of women from Serbia, all eager to take in the lady's large expressive eyes, long narrow nose and noble sadness. For some of them, the icon is a stand-in for the real thing: the mystical thread that links them to the divine prototype.

American painter Marina Pearce, who flew into Salonica for the show was unequivocal. As she took in the sight of Mount Athos's virgin shores and imposing monasteries from the deck of the dilapidated Aghios Nikolaos ferry, the words, the fury, the impatience and the longing were impossible to ignore. "I am here to see the setting in which these unbelievable works of art were made, but I think you should tell your readers that from the point of view of modern women, having to see it from a boat just stinks."

It has even got worse. Thirty years ago, when boat trips were first laid on for women around the peninsula, they could pull up at the quays of monasteries dotted along the coastline. Next, in the early seventies, the ferries were forced to cruise the coastline at a distance of 200 metres. Now it is 500 metres or more.

"*WHEN* you all started wearing miniskirts and taking off your tops to sunbathe it was the beginning of the end," huffed Kyr Kostas, our guide. "The monks got angry. They refused to accept it." When I saw it, the feeling of being an outsider, an unacceptable outcast, was almost palpable. But take heart. The day may come yet when women can enter the hidden world of Mount Athos — if only for an hour or two. Our anger will not wane. It will only increase as the renewal of interest in medieval art and the phenomenal revival of all things Byzantine — clearly underlined by the recent record-breaking Glory of Byzantium exhibition at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art — is also on the increase.

For too long — as Sir Steven Runciman noted in Athens recently, speaking after having received the first major prize for his contribution to the field — "Historians, led by such thinkers as Montesquieu and above all Edward Gibbon, had dismissed the medieval Greek world — the world of Byzantium — as a decadent, corrupt and superstitious backwater in the river of history. For too long, the glories of ancient Greece had eclipsed the era that was to have a profound effect on religious art across Europe.

"The spirituality and the idea of hierarchy so implicit in the eastern Roman Empire is deeply attractive in a world where existential loneliness has become such a problem," Professor Vassilis Katsarols, a leading expert at the University of Salonica, contends. "Ten years ago people were saying Mount Athos would become a museum. Now hundreds of young and highly educated men are moving there. They clearly want more."

Indeed. So do women. For the monks who claim that the female ban helps smooth their communion with God, the time may be nigh for their protector, the Virgin Mary, to intervene.

The Treasures of Mount Athos at the Museum of Byzantine Civilisation in Salonica until December 31

Mind the gap

Victor Keegan

IF GEORGE Stephenson were alive he would have recognised it as a successor to his 24mph Rocket, although he'd have been a bit puzzled by the fact that it hadn't got any wheels. But as Katsutoshi Isoura, director general of Japan's magnetic-levitation train project, points out, the wheeled train, after 170 years of development, has reached near perfection with no significant improvements in sight.

He was speaking in Tokyo on the day that Japan's pilot maglev train reached a speed of 401km per hour on the specially built 42.8km Yamanashi test track. Katsutoshi is confident that it will reach its target speed of 550kph fairly soon and adds that further into the future there is no limit to the speeds it could achieve (though really high speeds would require huge power sub stations). This compares with 300kph for prototype high-speed trains in France and Italy running on conventional tracks, and 350kph for Japan's pioneering Shinkansen "bullet" trains in trials.

The introduction of an ultra-fast maglev train could cut the journey time from Tokyo to Osaka from 2 hours 30 minutes to one hour (the equivalent of London to Paris in under 45 minutes). The new line would run parallel to the existing link which ferries 300,000 people every day from Tokyo to Osaka.

Fast track . . . Maglev trains are quieter, quicker and greener than other vehicles PHOTOGRAPH: EPA

The existing bullet train accounts for 85 per cent of all passenger traffic between the two cities. Planes hardly get a look in.

A maglev train floats above the tracks using principles not dissimilar to those school-time experiments with repulsions between magnets of the same polarity. Electromagnetic coils in the guideway generate magnetic fields that act against magnets in the train, forcing the train off the ground and propelling it forwards. The key to the Japanese project is that it makes use of a phenomenon known as superconductivity. When some metals are cooled below a specific temperature their resistance vanishes. If an electric current is applied to a coil made of a superconductive metal, it flows permanently without loss. The coils in the guideway of the Japanese maglev project work in this way. This requires them to be cooled to an astonishing -269C.

A maglev train starts off running on wheels then, after it has gathered speed for take-off, the tyres retract imperceptibly as the train is driven along a cushion of air. Because the Japanese system employs superconductors rather than electromagnets to lift the carriages and propel them forward, there is no need for a motor in the train itself.

Maglev trains are claimed to be quieter than their conventional counterparts, safer than other transport systems and greener.

Twenty-five years ago, Britain was at the cutting edge of research into magnetic levitation but — like tilting trains — the project was abandoned.

There are plans to develop maglev train services in Germany, the United States, Australia and Thailand. London Underground is talking about the possibility of having maglev trains in operation by 2020.

It is a tribute to Japan's long-term approach that even when public spending is under siege because of the government's budget deficit, work on the train continues.

A Country Diary

Richard Cornish

WILSONS PROMONTORY, Victoria, Australia: El Niño has driven away most of the spring rain. The effects are beginning to show. Under the canopy of the eucalyptus the flowering plants are blooming with unusual urgency. The heaths, having flowered earlier in the season, are now almost finished. Heavy bells of red, purple and pink sag off spent spikes. Ants crawl into the remaining flowers and carry away the last reserves of nectar. The purple fruit of the Lilly Pilly trees are smaller than usual.

Orchids sit in small groupings amongst the leaf litter. Delicate little Spider orchids are extremely abundant. The moss on the great granite boulders is beginning to dry. Small ferns are shrivelling away.

The mountains which rise up from the waters of Bass Strait are high enough to attract thick bands of lentil-shaped clouds, but not extensive enough to create much-wanted rain. The wetlands beyond are in retreat and the swamp, normally covered with a layer of water after the winter rains, is now as dry as it gets at the end of a bad summer.

Only the seals basking in the sun seem oblivious to the drought. It's mating time and the granite islands are alive with the sound of males barking orders at their females. Last year's pups slide into the water. Only three out of 10 survive to adulthood; the others help feed the population of Great White sharks. For all of us it is going to be a long, dry summer.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

I HAVE heard that one of the 12 tribes of Israel settled in Nigeria and became the present-day Ibo people. Is this true?

WHEN Sargon II of Assyria took the city of Samaria in 721 BC he boasted of capturing 27,290 inhabitants. He deported them to distant parts of the empire (now Southern Turkey and Western Iran). Then he repopulated the city with deportees from Arabia. In legend the exiles form the "Ten Lost Tribes of Israel", but no more is recorded of them.

Even by the time of Jesus, the "Lost Tribes" formed the subject of rich speculation. Medieval travellers reported sightings — especially in central Asia, south Arabia and Abyssinia — and serious attempts were made to find them as late as the 19th century. Among peoples suggested as remnants of the Lost Tribes are the ancient "Bene-Israel" community of Bombay, the Falasha people of Ethiopia, and the "original" Mormons. I have not heard the Ibo peoples mentioned in this context. — *Tom Hennell, Withington, Cheshire*

I HAVE encountered a story which told how the Ibo and the Ga, among others, left Israel, crossed the Sahara and found refuge on the bend of the Niger before descending into West Africa. The Ga claim they can date this migration because many of their Gods were picked up during their journey across ancient Egypt. This alone might not be completely convincing, but both Ibo and Ga have preserved a variety of religious customs and beliefs which seem to have Judaic origin. — *Dr Augustus Casely-Hayford, London*

HAS bird song changed over the ages?

MALE canary birds who had the opportunity of listening to their father and another adult canary bird when young develop a slightly different song to both the versions of their seniors. Only the subsong, a very rough version of the normal bird song, seems to be innate. Also, the same species of sparrows have different "dialects" in different habitats. Again, only a rudimentary subsong remains, if a hatchling of either habitat is raised isolated. — *Michaela Reinsberg, Berlin, Germany*

SHAKESPEARE noted that in his time in springtime, the birds sang "Hey ding a ding, ding". — *Laurence G Mason, Duncan, BC, Canada*

WHY does the reception of weak television signals improve when it's raining?

MR Chatzigeorgiou (October 5) attributes improved reception to improved conductivity of the air. Most of us have seen television pictures from the moon. These have travelled through a vacuum, which has *no* conductivity. Radio frequency energy does not flow through the atmosphere as if it were an electrical current.

If increased air conductivity did improve signal strength, then rain to the north of transmitting sites would conduct the energy in that direction, weakening signals to the south. But people to the south might be able to improve their reception by judicious use of their garden sprinklers. — *Robert P Green, Parma, Ohio, USA*

PROBABLY a nearby surface — such as a brick wall — is behaving, when wet, like a reflector. This would enhance signal strength at the receiver. — *H Pursey, New Malden, Surrey*

YEARS ago in Texas a station manager found he could quadruple his listener range if he wet the soil around his transmitter, for a better grounding. Competitors sued him for exceeding the terms of his licence. He claimed to be not guilty but when his water bills were introduced as evidence, he changed his plea. — *H C Peterson, Woodland, Washington, USA*

Any answers?

WHY does your stomach rumble, and which is the best food to stop it doing so? — *Kathryn Templeton, Norwich*

HOW do I get rid of the pigeons that infest the balcony of my flat? — *Mike Gautrey, Geneva, Switzerland*

N'DJAMENA, the capital of Chad, boasts two sets of traffic lights. Are there any capital cities which have fewer? — *Wayne Cowpland, N'Djamena, Chad*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

Letter from France

Jacqueline Karp-Gendre

Post mastery

OUR postlady was off sick recently. Arthritis in the shoulder, she said, when she came back. Work-related. All that opening and shutting the van door.

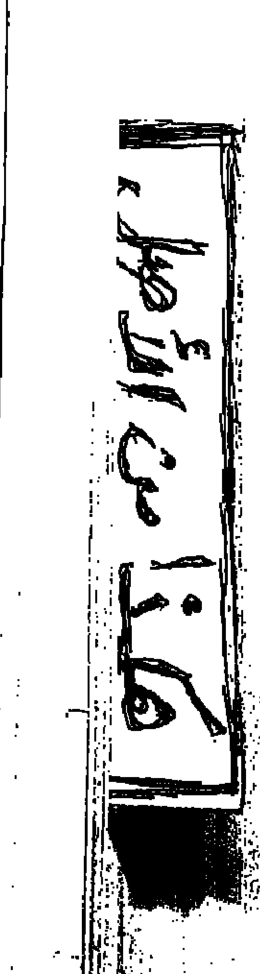
I'm sure it's work-related, but I have another theory as to how she got it. Take today, for example. Here is what I found in my letter box: my phone bill — a disaster, proving my son did come home on holiday, though I never saw him around the house in daylight hours. Another letter from France Telecom telling me to rejoice: phone calls were going down. Pity that isn't retrospective. Then, that rare treasure nowadays, a personal letter from a real friend. The rest: publicity. Not just the odd insurance leaflet, but glossy magazine-style productions from Centre Leclerc, Intermarche, Marche U and Atac, each supermarket vying with the next in cut-price specials and gory meat photos. As a vegetarian, I normally just dump them. Today I weighed them instead. Nearly 700 grammes of superbumf.

Apart from the endless envelopes with golden keys telling my husband he has become a millionaire (they get binned too, long before he gets home), I receive sample packets of paper tissues, shampoo and magic sink cleaner, to name but a few. Today, stuck in the corner of my letter box was a packet wrapped in Cellophane. It contained in Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, Dutch and Greek (Scandinavian languages were notably absent for this very ungreen product) dire warnings not to let children get their hands on it. "An irritant for eyes and skin." I was invited to try the dangerous tablet it contained in my dishwasher to reduce levels of chalky deposit on my wine glasses. Luckily I have no grandchildren yet.

I have tried putting a stop to the overload on my letterbox and Madame Fournier's shoulder at one and the same time. My postmaster is more than willing. I just have to say "no". But — always that "but" — I would no longer receive my free local community magazine with information on garden-refuse collection dates, local history features, updates on roadworks and street-lighting . . . need I go on? In short, a worthy publication which I fail to place in the same category as close-up portraits of pig carcasses.

A side-kick to Madame Fournier's new downgraded occupation as state-salaried slave to the supermarket and washing-product magnates is that I now receive my post around one o'clock. It used to come before half past eleven, allowing me time to go through it before lunch.

And does my postmaster have a solution to that one? Of course he does. Why don't I rent a PO box? Then I could drive the 2km to *la poste* and collect my mail personally every day on the dot of nine.



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
October 26 1997

Five years ago, Soviet communism collapsed and Cuba was under pressure from the US. Now, with Fidel Castro's 'admissible concessions', there is a dollar economy and mass tourism. **Jonathan Steele** reports

Havana good time

YOU CAN hardly call him a Comeback Kid. He is 71, and has never left power. But Fidel Castro leads a Comeback Country, an extraordinary example of national resilience in the face of crisis. The hundreds of thousands of Cubans who turned out last week for the lying-in-state and the funeral of the guerrilla hero, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, were not just interring his bones. They were also celebrating survival after the toughest crisis in the island's history since the defeat of the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961.

Take anyone from the small groups of dissidents, the diplomatic community, religious believers, or people in the street, and there is almost unanimous agreement that whatever they think about the country's ideological system, economic life has become easier.

"Everything was lost in 1992 . . . People were giving the revolution only days to live," Castro declared dramatically in his six-hour speech to the recent Communist Party Congress on the eve of Che's funeral. The collapse of the Soviet Union had sent living standards plummeting, as the island's cheap supplies of oil came to a halt, loans dried up, and imports were slashed.

Long obsessed by Castro and flushed with the triumphalism of cold war victory, the United States chose this moment of weakness to deliver what it hoped to be the *coup de grâce*. Exploding cigars and other assassination attempts over the years had failed, but a tightening of the embargo would do the trick. First President Bush and then Bill Clinton gave the green light for a clampdown on humanitarian supplies and sanctions against European and other countries trading with or investing in Cuba.

In response, Castro announced a Special Period. Single-handedly, he overcame decades of Latin American machismo, and got people to ride bicycles to beat the transport crisis. A nation of 11 million now has 2 million bicycles. Overcoming his own emotional aversion, he legalised the dollar, cleverly looking to thousands of individual Cuban-Americans to break their own country's embargo.

The figures are never admitted in official Cuban statistics, and they are equally kept silent in Washington, but Cuba's biggest source of hard currency is money sent to Cubans from relatives abroad. It filters through banks in Canada, Mexico, Spain and other countries or is hand-carried by "mules". The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America estimates the annual total at $800 million, well in excess of the $600 million derived from the new mass tourism.

As part of what he called "the admissible concessions", Castro also allowed Cubans to go into small-scale private business, running cafés and bars, driving taxis, and renting out rooms to foreigners.

But even in the depths of the crisis, he never accepted any dilution of the glue that holds the country's loyalty together: the system of universal and free education and medicine, and a state pension for all, have remained intact, making Cuba unique among developing countries.

The dollar economy has created strains, putting something even as simple as a café out of the reach of most people. "There's almost nowhere we can go," says Pepito, a member of a group of painters called Street-Art, as he hung out with friends on a park bench under palm trees in central Havana. "The Tropical is the best place for music, and entry is free, but you want a drink and you can't afford it."

To acquire a dollar costs 22 pesos, but with a national average salary of around 240 pesos a month, that leaves almost nothing to buy.

Cuba's superb climate, with its balmy evenings, softens what in Soviet communism would have been intolerable. So too does Castro's ban on conspicuous wealth. No amount of rich relatives in Miami will make it possible for anyone to import a late-model car or motorbike. But the main defence against dissatisfaction is the ideology of solidarity and the rejection of consumerism.

Within the contradictions of the revolution, everyone carves out a niche. Stopped in the street at random, Manuel, a 23-year-old biology student, says: "Only about 2 or 3 per cent really want to leave here. Obviously people sometimes get pissed off and say 'I'm going to get out of this shit', but they don't mean it." Guaranteed a job in a hospital or a research institute when he graduates, he and his friends have no fear of being unemployed.

The huge expansion of free higher education after the revolution meant that 62 per cent of graduates in the 1970s were children of workers and peasants. That figure has dropped to 36 per cent, as most students come from families whose parents were part of the earlier university boom. Manuel is one of the 36 per cent. He supplements his meagre grant with a little "business".



Schoolchildren in Havana line the route of the funeral for the guerrilla hero Che Guevara last week PHOTOGRAPH: JONATHAN STEELE

Every so often he travels home to his village in eastern Cuba and brings bacon and tobacco back to Havana to sell. Does he have relatives in the US who are happy to send him things? "Yes," he replies, pointing to his T-shirt, his watch and his shoes. "But we never talk politics with them. There is no basis for agreement, so why create tension?"

ON MY last visit to Cuba, in 1983, political conversations with people in the street, let alone on-the-record interviews with critical intellectuals were impossible. Indeed, even though Castro has not proclaimed any policy of glasnost, there is more openness in Cuban society today than in the Soviet Union two or three years before Gorbachev came to power. Although privately owned computers with e-mail are not available, the Internet has put hundreds of intellectuals with access to office computers in touch with colleagues abroad.

The ravages of the wild introduction of the market economy in Russia as well as the effects of neo-liberalism in Latin America, with the growing gap between rich and poor, and flourishing crime and child prostitution, have given a boost to the search for alternatives. Haroldo Dilla, of the Institute of Philosophy, is one of a group of social scientists who have argued, in published articles, for Cuba to develop genuine production co-operatives to get over the artificial opposition of state versus market. He also believes more scope should be given to community associations in order to "socialise power". This could stop the trend towards apathy and protest shown in recent elections. "The logic of this country is that it is escaping from the control of any one man or party. Elements of the market and political autonomy are coming in," Dilla says, "but there has to be a re-design of Cuban society."

Such views are not welcome at the top, especially since the two US laws tightening the embargo, the Torricelli and Helms-Burton Acts, call on the president to force Cuba into a "transition" to capitalism and to encourage the penetration of the intelligentsia with alternative ideas.

In reaction, Fidel's brother Raul last year strongly attacked the Centre for American Studies where Dilla worked. He and seven others were sent off to other institutes, although they continue to publish and travel abroad. This summer also saw a new clampdown on the country's dissidents. Two years ago, some 140 unofficial groups formed a coalition called Concilio Cubano, but their only effort to hold a joint meeting ended in disaster with the imprisonment of two leaders.

The small groups, rarely more than two or three dozen strong, face constant harassment. The usual tactic is job dismissal and short-term detention coupled with pressure to leave the country. Others are subjected to "acts of repudiation", where an organised crowd shouts abuse outside their windows to intimidate them and their neighbours. Amnesty International has catalogued an increase in such pressures since April this year.

"The reformers are afraid," says Oscar Espinosa, a former economist at the National Bank who now leads the unofficial Committee for Human Rights and National Reconciliation. "I used to live in Czechoslovakia. Today's dissident movement is stronger than theirs was, but the regime's roots are also stronger. Fidel has enormous charisma, and Che is admired by the majority of Cubans."

The recent Fifth Party Congress, the first since 1991, confirmed the conservative mood among the leadership. The partnership of socialism with patriotism, which has always marked Cuba out from eastern Europe, swung strongly towards the nationalist side. The congress's main political document was a largely backward-looking essay on the need for unity to defend independence and the legacy of the 19th century patriot Jose Marti.

The economic resolution made no concessions to co-operatives or small-scale private business. "We had two years of discussion," says Omar Everleny, deputy director of the Centre for the Study of the Cuban Economy, which helped to draft the resolution. "We didn't want to confine the reference to small and medium business to the state sector, but the final draft put in the word 'state'. They don't want to develop or go beyond what we have now."

Fidel's clear message is, "So far but no further". After 39 years in power, he is not going to give the US even a hint of victory.

Throwing light on a dangerous new game

Roger Tredre

ONCE fans would hold up a lighted match to show appreciation of a band. But that would never do in the hi-tech nineties, and there are growing fears that the modern equivalent — the laser pointer — is dangerous and should be banned from clubs, bars and rock venues.

The pointers look like keyrings or pens and can throw a red dot of light on to a target up to 200ft away. Originally developed for office presentations, they first appeared in British clubs early this year.

Andrew Diprose, aged 25, of Sky magazine, a regular clubber, said: "Now it's got out of hand. They should get rid of them. You can see them everywhere from big venues like the Ministry of Sound to small underground clubs. I've seen DJs infuriated because the beams are on their faces all night long. It drives them mad."

Liam Gallagher threatened to walk off stage at the Oasis concert at London's Earl's Court last month after beams were persistently directed at his face.

Pointers are among the top 10 products at The Leading Edge, a retailer of hi-tech toys with stores in central London. Its buyer, Marie Butler, said: "Since the summer they have flown out of our stores."

Prices range from £25 ($40) up to £100 ($160) for executive models. One of the best-selling pointers is a keyring menacingly shaped like a bullet.

The pointers have a power output of less than 5 milliwatts. Lyte Optronics, a London-based company which manufactures them, says there is no risk from momentarily viewing one. However, many are being deliberately aimed in faces for long periods.

Most adults automatically blink when a beam is shone into the eye. But the pointers should be kept away from children who might not use them safely, said Julian Stevens, consultant ophthalmologist at Moorfields Eye Hospital, London.

Women fear the lasers are being used as a form of sexual harassment. Maggie Richards, aged 26, of Stoke Newington, north London, said: "Guys go round pubs with these lasers pointing at your chest. They think it's a laugh. You feel like you're being molested."

A leading academic on gender relations said the pointers were an aggressive toy. Julie Bindel, assistant director of Leeds Metropolitan University's centre of violence, abuse and gender relations, said: "What can look like innocent fun is often experienced as harassment. Men who use this kind of toy know exactly what they're doing. They're out to frighten women."

However, young people may see the gender battle in different terms. Natalie Hurley, aged 14, of Newmarket, Cambridgeshire, said: "I use mine to annoy people and to attract blokes' attention."

Pointers have already been banned from many football grounds after reports from Spanish clubs, where rival fans shone them in goalkeepers' eyes while penalties were taken.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
October 26 1997

Many people would find these ads offensive. Not, it seems, the French, writes **Alex Duval Smith**

A bra too far

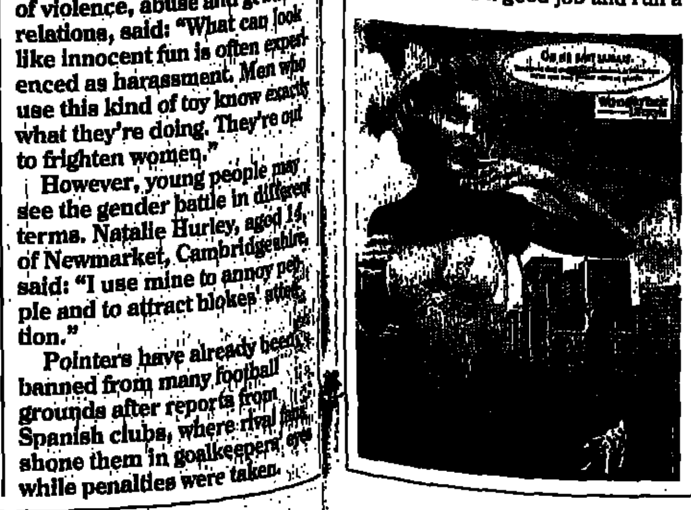
DO YOU have nightmares in which you are walking down a crowded street wearing nothing but a shower cap or a bra, and you are powerless to do anything about it? Susanna Hailstone, an executive with the LSD advertising agency in London, does. "I think it is quite a common dream among women — it's about powerlessness and being exposed in public," she says.

No stranger to nudity, it was Hailstone who, three years ago, put the supermodel Eva Herzigova in a Wonderbra alongside the caption "Hello Boys". The message of that poster, she says, was in stark contrast to a series of Wonderbra adverts developed in France and currently running in magazines such as Paris-Match and French Elle. The French ads have a "retro" look and are straight out of Hailstone's nightmares. In one, a woman in a launderette finds her cardigan has shrunk. To the great delight of a boy looking up at her, this reveals her Wonderbra. In another, a woman's jumper is unravelled by a dog who has caught hold of a loose thread, revealing her bra to the city gents passing by. "On ne sait jamais" (you never know) is the caption on both pictures, whose theme reportedly aims to be an antidote to the trend for women to be in control.

"The difference between the original Wonderbra campaign and this French one is all about whether the women are flaunting their sexuality, which is something assertive, or having it flaunted by something outside their control," Hailstone says. "The fact that the pictures are dressed up in a retro look does not make them any less naff. You would never get away with it in Britain."

Yet I am not writing about lingerie ads because of some French storm in a C-cup prompted by the new ads. In fact, France, the world's number one lingerie-buying market, does not seem to have noticed.

"There is not the same amount of awareness among French women of images in the media relating to their status. Most French women do not think they are victims in a sexist society," says Regan Cramer, a United States feminist who has lived in France for 15 years and chairs a shelter organisation called Du Côté Des Femmes (On Women's Side). "Part of the reason they do not feel victimised is that it is much easier in France to have a good job and run a family than it is in other countries. There are many legal safeguards, protection at work is decent, you cannot get laid off when you are pregnant, abortion is pretty much an unquestioned right, and there are excellent crèche facilities for all."



Cramer adds, however, that awareness in France is growing. "Seven years ago, the novelist Benoîte Groult was asked by the Académie Française to look at how the names of professions could be feminised, to get away from anachronisms such as *Madame le médecin* (doctor) and *Madame le ministre* (government minister) — masculine titles attached to women.

"Groult came up with words like *auteure* (author with an e to denote femininity) but her work went largely unnoticed. Then this year, without any reference to Groult's work, the seven women currently in the French cabinet are being referred to as Madame *la* ministre," Cramer says. What's more, while the women in the previous conservative government of Alain Juppé were dismissively referred to as the "Juppettes", partly because *jupe* means skirt, "the women in the new government of Lionel Jospin have not become Jospinettes. There has been a subtle change".

Cramer also draws attention to a bill proposed by Juppé's government to compel publishers to edit school textbooks for sexist references. "A working party came up with really startling examples in alphabet books on masculine and feminine words. Feminine ones were things like *une casserole* (a saucepan) and masculine words were more cerebral like *un livre* (a book)."

At the Association Européenne Contre Les Violences Faites Aux Femmes Au Travail (European Association Against Violence Against Women In The Workplace), Gisèle Amoussou argues that awareness is emerging. "We are currently running a campaign against the clothing chain La City, whose ads feature naked women with their arms crossed but bending over and looking suggestive. When we approached La City, they were surprised and argued that a woman had dreamt up the ad." Last year, Amoussou's group succeeded in pressing Suchard to cancel a Christmas ad campaign for Rocher chocolates. The posters were both sexist and racist, featuring a naked black woman painted in gold to echo the wrapping on the chocolate.

In France, however, sex and portrayals of it are celebrated, and political correctness is considered laughable. Men and women go about their cinq à septs (illicit love affairs between 5pm and 7pm) and are opposed to itemised phone bills because of the peccadillos they might reveal. Charm and the ability to seduce are considered prime attributes for both sexes. So, in their usual, happy complicity with men, French women are unlikely to lose sleep over the nightmare Wonderbra adverts. Most women have not noticed them.

WHILE BETC, the Paris-based agency behind the ad, was not commenting, Patricia Bohly, aged 28, who runs a newspaper kiosk in central Paris, was happy to talk. "This bra gives you a nice bosom, so why not show it? As for the guys looking at the women, you need to get things into perspective. Lots of ads, if they do not have pictures of men looking, are encouraging male onlookers to do so. What is the difference?"

Hubert Barrère, a corset-maker for designers Stella McCartney and Alexander McQueen, says he aims to glorify the feminine form: "To please women and, with any luck, their boyfriends." But he wishes French women would see the difference between flaunting and being flaunted. "There is no reaction to this advert because women in France are confused and do not see that the time has come — it came years ago — when they do not have to see themselves through men's eyes."

Today Ambridge, tomorrow the world

Anne Karpf previews the BBC World Service's first radio soap opera

IS AN international soap opera a contradiction in terms? The street, the square and the village are at the hearts of successful soaps, but can such localism have international appeal? The BBC World Service thinks it can, without resorting to anodyne kitsch like the German Black Forest Clinic or rich bitch drama like Dynasty.

Next month the World Service launches its first soap — a twice-weekly 15-minute serial, Westway, set in in a West London health centre which, it believes, will not only hold the service's existing 35 million listeners to its English language services, but add to them.

The characters span an impeccable range of ages, genders, and ethnic backgrounds, from 58-year-old unmarried senior partner Dr Margaret Sampson, to flirtatious-but-charming 43-year-old married Dr David Boyce. They're joined by 29-year-old Dr Joy Onwukwe from Nigeria, with other practice staff members coming from Indian and Jamaican families. Oh, and one is a single parent.

Such a rundown makes it sound horribly like soap-by-numbers, a creation based more on the census than the imagination. Which is where Citizens, BBC Radio 4's late-eighties soap opera, fell down: its characters included Irish Catholic twins from Liverpool, an Anglo-Indian female doctor from Birmingham, and a yuppie merchant banker, all tenants of a single parent landlady. Soap box not soap opera, said critics and listeners; it bombed.

Westway's production team, David Hitchinson and Anne Edyvean, aim not to make the same mistakes. They have a distinguished radio drama record, as does its writing team, which includes Sarah Daniels, Tanika Gupter and Mike Walker.

Hitchinson argues that "the stories are international but they grow out of people's lives in London". So rooted is the setting that the team has even produced a map of the area surrounding the health centre and a layout of the practice itself. A dedicated website will carry further details about the characters and where they live, work and socialise.

Hitchinson acknowledges that "soap usually works best if it's based in a small community", but believes that it also needs to "resonate with international issues — life, death, illness, grief, guilt". Yet this "universal emotions" approach is problematic: feelings like guilt and grief are experienced differently in different societies.

The BBC World Service is highly sensitive to the subject of cultural difference. Westway's makers have consulted its 44 language services, and fed pilot episodes to focus groups in Nigeria, India and Singapore, who have responded enthusiastically, recognising characters' situations and sentiments.

Nevertheless, attempting to reach so many different countries with a soap does throw up cultural conundrums. To portray British community life with any degree of authenticity, a trip to the pub is a must. But how do you guard against giving offence to cultures where alcohol is taboo? Single parenthood, too, is regarded quite differently in Africa and India. And what about Aids and contraception? Bob Jobbins, the World Service's director of programme commissioning, argues that the BBC can discuss all kinds of issues which domestic radio stations can't. "We've broadcast extensively on issues like Aids in English, Arabic, Urdu, and Hindi. And we've had warm responses: people have said that these things happen, but they don't get generally talked about in their countries." We shouldn't assume, either, that Britain is invariably more liberal than the rest of the world. Teenage mothers, for example, get a much more sympathetic response elsewhere.

But, Jobbins adds, "We're not making a programme tailored to the cultural sensitivities of the world. We're making an entertaining and stimulating programme, which is related to the cultural life of Britain, and is character-based." Isn't disseminating a London-centric view to the rest of the world a kind of soft imperialism? You don't have to be Roland Barthes to recognise that the title "Westway" sounds uncannily like the Western way, and the series will inevitably drip-feed Western medical practice to cultures where it's alien.

Jobbins maintains that the London setting is justified not only because the BBC World Service is situated in London, but because Britain is now intensely multi-cultural. "You could go down a street and find people from most of the countries where we have lots of listeners. And when you go to countries like Nigeria, you'll always find someone who's just come back from working as a cab-driver in London."

As for its didactic purpose, soaps from The Archers onwards have been recruited for educational purposes, especially medical soaps. Even ITV's Emergency Ward 10 (1957-67) — though today it seems ludicrously soapy — was actually described at the time as drama-documentary and praised by the British Medical Association for helping to relieve public fear about hospital treatment.

And Westway has another, more functional purpose: to help build the BBC World Service's English-language audience by 2.5 million. Today news and current affairs is the chief bait for its listeners, mainly men. Westway has been devised partly to lure young people and women outside the peak listening hours.

An English language support programme, Westway Access, will explain the language, colloquialisms and cultural issues to students of English. The pilot gives examples such as "'Who does she think she is?' This is a conversational expression you can use when you think that someone has been behaving in 'a superior way", which put one in mind of the famous old New Statesman competition inviting ways to mislead foreigners. Its winners included "Don't offend a London cabbie by offering him a tip" and "Try out the famous echo in the British Museum reading room".

Whatever the fate of Westway, with some added bile and guile, Westway Access could run and run.

Westway begins on the BBC World Service on November 4

A walk on the Wilde side with little conviction

CINEMA
Richard Williams

THE WIDER the screen, the narrower the story. Or so, high on instant paradox, we might conclude at the end of Wilde, which tackles a scandal resonating throughout a century of English history but achieves what is, in the circumstances, the most paradoxical of states: respectability.

Although it deals with the story of a maverick, Brian Gilbert's Wilde turns out to be a well-made film in the brass-bound tradition of British mainstream cinema. It may open with an unexpected scene — Wilde's lecture to the workers at a Colorado silver mine in 1882 — but thereafter its only claim to shock is offered by the licence to show us bedroom scenes forbidden to previous generations.

Barely 100 years after Lord Alfred Douglas wrote of the love that dare not speak its name, and less than 20 years since that phrase was admitted into the genteel pages of the Oxford Dictionary Of Quotations, multiplex audiences will bear unembarrassed witness to the dramatic simulation of men having sex with each other. Whether the film tells us anything new about the deeper nature of its protagonist is a more interesting question.

Since there will always be those who transgress the accepted boundaries of public morality and receive martyrdom as their reward, the saga of Wilde's downfall is unlikely to lose its iconic significance. Perhaps every era will get the Wilde it deserves. And for all the excellence of the supporting cast and the period upholstery, Stephen Fry's thoughtful portrayal of Wilde really is the whole point of Gilbert's film.

We know that Wilde was the victim of establishment hypocrisy, and of Douglas's father, the mad and bad Marquess of Queensberry. In an early scene we see him cross a London courtyard against a tide of wigs and gowns. Later, those lawyers reappear, as if lit by Rembrandt, in the guise of his prosecutors. And Tom Wilkinson, brutal and bewhiskered, certainly lives up to the surviving image of the pathologically vindictive Queensberry.



Intoxication . . . Wilde, played by Stephen Fry, right, is a sitting target for Bosie Douglas (Jude Law)

But Fry, with his moist, regretful gaze and his soft, wry phrases, presents a surprising view of Wilde as the prey of those closest to him: of his mother, the barking Lady "Speranza" (Vanessa Redgrave), with her insistence on living "above respectability"; of his first male lover, the solicitous Robert Ross (Michael Sheen); of the London rent-boys; even of his wife, the lambently uxorious Constance (Jennifer Ehle). And, of course, of the vain, arrogant, terminally selfish Bosie Douglas, whose hold over Wilde was strong enough to enable him to repossess and reject the older man's affections at will. Jude Law's Bosie is a persuasive combination of perfect body and warped intelligence, a viper in peach silk and apricot satin, to whom Fry's warm and generous Wilde presents a sitting target.

Firmly based on Richard Ellman's definitive biography, Julian Mitchell's script can do little — given the time and scope — to describe Wilde's genius. A sprinkling of epigrams and a couple of triumphant first nights in the West End would be insufficient evidence of his talent to convince anyone who came to the film in ignorance. But in the nervous precision with which Wilde arranges his dishes and cutlery, Fry lets us glimpse the frailty beneath the fireworks.

The former coalfields of Britain, with their slag heaps and the mute plateaux where winding gear once stood, present strange and equivocal landscapes. What dreams are permitted to those who remain in places stripped of meaning? In **House of America**, Marc Evans shows us a family stranded on the outskirts of a small town in South Wales, where their romantic visions of Elvis, Highway 61 and Jack Kerouac collide with a reality of Reliant Robins and rugby club booze-ups.

We are told that the father of the household has already decamped to the Promised Land. Postcards to Main Street, Dodge City, go unanswered, but those he left behind still cherish the dream of joining him one day. Somehow that seems less illusory than the chimera of normal employment — even at the new open-cast mine, where gangs led by men with Irish and Scouse accents rip the crust off the familiar earth.

While Mam (Sian Phillips) drifts into dementia, her son Sid (Steven Mackintosh) and daughter Gwenny (Lisa Palfrey) channel their obsession into acting out the roles of Kerouac and his girlfriend Joyce Johnson — a dangerous game. Only their younger brother, Boyo (Matthew Rhys), maintains a hold on reality.

Is this Cold Comfort Farm or Badlands? A bit of both, at times, as dreams of freedom turn self-destructive and buried truths emerge in blood and fire. Evans's use of black and white sequences of the father (Pascal Laurent) in the US turns out to be a brilliantly subtle device. And John Cale, the Greatest Living Welshman (if you discount Barry John and Ryan Giggs), marshals a soundtrack juxtaposing songs from the first Velvet Underground LP in versions by young British groups with Tom Jones at his most poignantly and pertinently transatlantic: when Jones sings I'm Coming Home and The Green Green Grass Of Home, where exactly is this "home"?

The Welsh for soul is hwyl, and House Of America has it in truckloads.

Dublin's emerald smile

THEATRE
Michael Billington

ENGLISH drama, as Kenneth Tynan once wrote, is a procession of glittering Irishmen; and in the wake of Wilde, Shaw and O'Casey comes an exuberant array of new talent. Conor McPherson (whose The Weir is still my highlight of the year), Martin McDonagh, Sebastian Barry, Jimmy Murphy and Marina Carr have all lately made their mark in London. And this year's Dublin Theatre Festival — the 40th — is awash with new plays from the likes of best-selling novelist Joseph O'Connor, debutant playwright Alex Johnston and even, at 63, a relative veteran in Thomas Kilroy. But what is the source of Ireland's resurgent theatrical energy? "National self-confidence," claims the Gate Theatre's director, Michael Colgan. He cites the booming economy, the influx of European money, the country's success on the world stage.

But prosperity alone cannot explain Ireland's theatrical renaissance. My hunch, as an outsider, is that it has a lot to do with the dizzying rapidity of the society's transition from Catholic to secular — or, if you like, spiritual to materialist — and an awareness that the process involves loss and pain as well as gain. That idea lies at the heart of Joseph O'Connor's The Weeping Of Angels, at the Gate. It is only the second play by this prolific writer, but, despite some venomous local attacks, it has an imaginative power.

O'Connor's setting is a decaying Dublin attic occupied early in the next century by three brides of Christ. Sister Veronica is a blind, free-swearing termagant not unrelated to Hamm in Beckett's Endgame. Mother Bernard is her devoted slave, who, like Hamm's Clov, acts as her eyes on the outside world. And Sister Eugenia is a silent, bedbound figure formerly imprisoned for beating children. This hermetic world is shattered one Christmas Eve by the descent from the skies of two workmen; it transpires that they are visiting the last religious sisters left in Ireland.

There is a fascinating contradiction at the heart of O'Connor's work. On the one hand, he suggests that Irish Catholicism has gone into free fall through its authoritarianism; yet he also acknowledges the irrepressible nature of the spiritual instinct. Mother Bernard's rejection of carnal passion is treated with total seriousness, we learn that Sister Veronica's blindness stems from her militancy as a Congo missionary, and finally the two women, bound together by love, unite in singing Soul Of My Saviour.

O'Connor writes like a man torn between two ideas — detestation of Catholic dogma and awareness of religion's ancestral power. He is asking the most challenging question: is a purely materialist world desirable or possible?

While O'Connor looks to the future, Thomas Kilroy's The Secret Fall Of Constance Wilde, at the Abbey Theatre, takes us back to the past — to the idea that Oscar's wife was as much a puppet in the hands of malign fate as Oscar or Lord Alfred Douglas. The problem is, one never knows how much credence to attach to Kilroy's theory that Constance was the victim of paternal abuse.

One comes to feel the characters are being manipulated as much by Kilroy, in his preoccupation with parent-child relationships, as by the vengeful gods. But Patrick Mason's production, Joe Vanek's design and David Bolger's movement, are visually brilliant. Jane Brennan's fiercely intelligent Constance and Robert O'Mahoney's contradictory Oscar humanise a play obsessed with abstract patterns.

I preferred Alex Johnston's Melonfarmer, playing in the Abbey's studio theatre, the Peacock. Johnston himself has described it as a blend of Taxi Driver and Friends, this episodic account of the interlocking lives of a group of young Dubliners suggests to me an Irish Shopping And Fucking.

Above all, there is a sense of young people yearning for contact and permanence.

On the couch . . . Amelia Crowley and Patrick Leech in Melonfarmer

Don't roll over, Beethoven

MUSIC
Adam Sweeting

AT THE press conference, a journalist asked Paul McCartney what point he was trying to make with Standing Stone, his new semi-symphonic work for orchestra and chorus at the Royal Albert Hall. "It's just a question of loving music," shrugged the illustrious former Beatle. "Because it's there. It's a challenge."

The classical critics have not been kind to the CD of Standing Stone. The experts consider its structure to be episodic, its musical themes hackneyed, and its subject matter — the evolution of man — risible. Unfortunately, they have a point. Despite roping in a support squad of arrangers and orchestrators, McCartney never quite convinces you that this is a genuine full-scale orchestral piece, featuring coherent ideas which develop as the work progresses.

The scale of McCartney's past musical achievements is undeniable. However, it is foolish to pretend that there isn't a vertiginous learning curve between writing pop songs and creating symphonies, and McCartney has not yet scaled it. His insistence that he has no intention of learning to write and orchestrate music because all that theoretical clutter might hamper his instinctive creative juices is disingenuous. Standing Stone contains many small gems of melodic inspiration, but a knack for strong hooks and nifty middle eights is not enough to sustain a piece of these dimensions.

Since this is not pop music, there wasn't much hope that a live performance could wreak some radical transformation of Standing Stone's basic musical shape, but it was at least an event. This world premiere performance had whipped up a cyclone of media interest, although there was a sense that everyone was secretly hoping that at the last moment Sir Fab would throw aside all this classical nonsense, jump onstage with his Hofner guitar, and start singing Roll Over Beethoven.

No such luck. None the less, compared with the short pieces which comprised the concert's first half, Standing Stone sounded like Beethoven. The opening item, Stately Horn, was a master-class in how not to write for four French horns. Inebriation was written for the Brodsky Quartet, but would sound just as good on a harmonica. The orchestral pieces, A Leaf and Spiral, might just pass muster as background music for an afternoon soap.

Standing Stone at least has some episodes of punchy orchestral playing, some surging string writing and crisp brass punctuations. The oceanic episodes successfully evoke the rolling briny. A shame, then, that Sir Paul has padded this slab of pseudo-Celtic poppycock with a choir droning "ooh" and "aah" like sick sheep. It's hard to see why it couldn't last 20 minutes instead of 75.

Why did Dali create his lobster telephone? Or Meret Oppenheim her fur-lined cup? What does it all mean? **Adrian Searle** reflects on the modern still life

Lobster on the line

Jokes and queries . . . Dali's Lobster Telephone (1936) and Oppenheim's Objects (1936)

IMAGINE you reading this. Glance away from the paper, look left or right, and there's probably some collision of objects near to hand which might be called a still life. It is unlikely to be — at this time of day — a guttering candle and a human skull, or a vast pile-up of dead game and seafood. But already this morning you were in the bathroom still life of lotions, toothbrushes, soap dishes and scent, and mired in the *nature morte* detritus of the breakfast table, replete with cereals, toast-rack and the horror mail. Perhaps you are now perched in front of the office desk still life, the keyboard, phone and fax still life, augmented with mug and yogurt pot; or at the lunchtime pub still life with ashtray, glass and nuked lasagne. What is certain is that the little scene includes this week's Guardian Weekly, as ubiquitous to the still life you're close to as Le Journal was — along with the guitar, absinthe glass and pipe — at the Cubist lunch break.

Still life is about the close-to-hand, but it has equally always been a carefully crafted fiction, never so much a matter of happenstance as of artifice. It is a re-ordered, edited version of the world of things, taking into account their use values, acquired meanings, conjunctions and visual alliterations. Still life is a game of transpositions and transformations, metaphor and metaphysics. This is why the evening-class amateur exercise with the gingham tablecloth, the empty bottle of Piat d'Or and the withered orange has always been a random disaster. The artist's affinity with objects, the relationship both to and between the things chosen, counts for more than half the game.

Cézanne had his craftily wedged-up Provençal bowls and jugs and everlasting autumn apples. The Cubists had the everyday props of the bohemian dive; Matisse had his insufferable bourgeois knick-knacks, his furniture and balcony window; Meret Oppenheim took tea from her fur-lined cup and the Surrealists had the fictive objects of the fevered, Freudian imagination. Soutine had his strung-up, gutted cow's carcass — the thing probably smelt so bad he had to paint it quickly, which is why we call his work Expressionist; it was certainly *nature morte*.

Duchamp had his bicycle wheel mounted on a stool for company (keeping it in his studio for the pleasure of watching the spokes go round — time hanging heavy in the studio of the first Conceptualist). The Pop artists of the fifties and sixties had their everyday icons of mass consumerist culture — Warhol's multi-pack Brillo boxes and soup cans, Oldenberg's stuffed cakes and floppy vinyl typewriter, Richard Hamilton's electric toaster — and the last-ditch postmodernists of today have, well, whatever it is that they clutter their lives with. Robert Gober has a giant box of Kleenex with a drainpipe driven through it to keep to hand, which says much about the weepy endgames of contemporary art and life.

The Modern Still Life, at London's Hayward Gallery (until January 4), uses the developments and mutations of the still-life genre in the 20th century as a measure of modern life itself. The show is a little history of our age, and of the objects that have transformed modern living — telephones, typewriters, toasters and light bulbs slowly crowding out the fruit and veg and dead things. Subtitled Objects of Desire (a phrase that really should be put to sleep), the show has travelled from New York's Museum of Modern Art, where it was put together by Margit Rowell, the museum's curator of drawings. The Hayward is the exhibition's only European venue.

It is a gorgeous exhibition, with some truly great things in it — it is witty, surprising (the thing about art now is that its surprises come as no surprise) and, for the most part, beautifully arranged and designed.



We begin — inevitably — with Cézanne, and his knock-out Still Life With Ginger Jar And Aubergines, completed in 1894. It is the first and only thing you see as you enter the show, and it casts its influence right to the end, prefiguring most of what follows — the fractures, folds and compressions of Cubism; Matisse's flattened space, simplifications and love of pattern; Klee's and Mondrian's homages to Cézanne himself — and finding echoes right through to Jasper Johns and to Philip Guston's ice-clinking painting Highball, from 1979. Cézanne and Guston played with outlines, distorting wilfully and trying to pin down the furtive life of the inanimate. Luckily, the show spares us the slavishly dull, belated little masters of Cézanne's method who would undoubtedly litter the show had it been curated in Britain. The school of hard looking gives way to playfulness, madness and the ready-made. We are all consumers now.

Turn a corner and here is Picasso's wonderful painted-bronze absinthe glass from 1914, replete with real spoon. Here is Duchamp's infamous bicycle wheel and his autoerotic Chocolate Grinder (for the bachelor who grinds his own chocolate), and his birdcage full of marble sugar cubes. Here's Man Ray's vicious flat-iron, with its row of tintacks. Here's a metaphysical Morandi and an Art Deco Ferdinand Leger of two typewriters.

THE century gathers pace with Stuart Davis's 1924 proto-Pop painting with bottle of Odol mouthwash ("It Purifies," reads the label) reflected in the bathroom mirror; Gerald Murphy's emblematic painting of pen, razor and matchbox; Miro's 1937 psychedelic painting of an old shoe, which blows an entire room of otherwise conspicuous masterpieces out the window. On it goes — a Magritte with a slice of ham that looks at you with an accusing eye, a Dali lobster on the telephone making a cold crustacean call.

Although Dali's lobster telephone is weird, his painting of a perfectly ordinary wicker basket of bread is stranger. The bread in its basket is so much a part of daily life, so disregarded that its severe delicacy comes as a shock, straight from the 17th century Spanish still life tradition. Dali can be awful, and it is fashionable to trash him, but his presence here is a reminder of how pungent he could be. The show also reminds us how good a ceramicist Lucio Fontana was, with a glistening ceramic crab on a ceramic rock, from 1938. This show is filled with small significant pleasures, which is just as it should be.

But the nearer we get to the present — after the exuberance of Pop and French Nouveau Realism — the more of a strain the show becomes. Indeed, more of a strain life has become, witnessed by the return of Vanitas skulls, by Warhol and Gerhard Richter, and the decaying dinner table of Cindy Sherman's photographic tableau.

The final room in the exhibition, with Robert Therrien's stack of giant plates, Allan McCollum's huge, identical jars ("Perfect Vehicles"), Jeff Koons's basketball submerged in a water-filled fishtank, is full of things that aren't sure if they are still life or not. If you want a still life, the artists seem to be saying, you don't need art. Or that any art object which isn't a figure and doesn't have a tree in it is a still life. Mario Merz goes out with a bang, his spiral glass table piled with fresh produce, while the late Domenico Gnoli's prophetic 1966 painting of an empty table, covered with a white-on-white patterned cloth, is called Without A Still Life. It isn't a great painting, but it has a kind of elegiac poetry — it is about waiting, expectation and loss. The show should have ended here, but unfortunately we get a low slab of white marble on the floor covered in a meniscus of milk, by Wolfgang Laib, a still life for minimal cats.

The show might falter, but The Modern Still Life is a compelling exhibition of compelling objects, paintings and sculptures. It is a record of our changing relationships to the everyday. Leaving the show, the quotidian world seems more vivid, more strange and more meaningful, which is the best that we can hope.

Where bodies drop like ripe figs in Rhodes

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

THE beauty of Into The Blue (ITV) is you don't feel called upon to say something profound. Absolutely no teeth are needed as the boys on the barrers shout, selling liquescent fruit. Just bare your gums and enjoy it.

It was an enjoyable thriller, though not always in the way it intended. John Thaw's forte is solid worth. Harry Barnett seems a role written for a much less solid man. There is quite a bit of innocent merriment to be had watching Thaw outrunning accelerating cars, diving to avoid a bullet or jumping from the upper floor of a firebombed house.

It all began in Rhodes, where Harry, a boozy loser, wakes up beside a young and beautiful blonde. As one does. The blonde disappears. As they do.

Thereafter the soles of Harry's shoes hardly cool to scorching point. He escapes the Greek police and ping-pongs around London, Cambridge, Dorset and assorted scenic locations followed by mysterious dark cars, a bloke in a black balaclava and threatening background breathing.

Bodies drop like ripe figs and, wherever there's a body, there's Harry, like Macavity in reverse.

The suspects are a group of friends, entangled like sleeping snakes. Which one has the poison fangs? Is it a disgraced former MP and armament millionaire? A don who invents his weaponry? A lecherous psychiatrist? A failed priest turned schoolmaster? A paralysed hotelier? Or a knife-wielding mute, the foremost philosopher of his generation until someone pushed him out of a window.

Go on, pick one of six. No, no; you are *meant* to think it is the MP. *Everyone* thinks it is the MP. It's the schoolmaster. Apparently he and the MP were lovers ("I got out of politics but I couldn't get out of him", as the MP puts it rather too aptly), and he was making himself useful removing little inconveniences from his lover's life. Four women, one psychiatrist and one defenestrated philosopher at the last count.

Drivingly directed by Jack Gold, it moved in a nice smooth circuit like a racing car. No time to ask questions. You hung on to your hat.

"Gorillas," said Gladys Kalema, "like to fart a lot and frighten tourists." Which of us does not? One felt strangely drawn to these sagacious creatures.

Dr Kalema, young, beautiful and black, is in charge of Uganda's wildlife, horribly decimated by 30 years of civil war and poaching. Animal People (BBC1), which concentrates on the people rather than the animals, called her Gladys throughout. It is a series which has tended to patronise the audience too. The commentary was no strain on the brain.

There are only some 650 gorillas left in Uganda and fewer than 100 giraffes. Kenya has giraffes to spare, and Dr Kalema went to get some.

Giraffes are the supermodels of the animal world, dazzlingly lovely and temperamental, delicate and dangerous. That swinging neck can kill a lion. On the other hand they are quite liable to lie down and die.

She had to dart three of them (having practised on her fluffy toys in the backyard), instantly reverse the sedative and transport them by truck and air. They were young females. The tip of their fly-whisk tails were black. Their eyelashes were extravagant. Their little tufted horns swept back like tiny wings. Gazing mildly out of the truck, they looked like three lilies in a vase.

On arrival, one collapsed. Gladys raised its head and said with sudden sharp authority, "She'll get up. She'll get up. She'll get up." And she did get up. Gladys was breathing as if she had run and won a long race.

She is only 26 and looks braver than she feels. "Sometimes," she said, "I feel really afraid inside, but I don't want other people to see that and I try to project the image that I'm in control."

That, oddly enough, is what Bob the gorilla was doing, drumming his breast at a group of fascinated tourists. What most of us are doing most of the time.

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Memorial to a lost landscape

Paul Evans

A *N OLD* green lane links the hamlet of Kinton, nestling under sandstone cliffs by the village of Nesscliffe, with the River Severn. A hundred years ago the lane still served to bring lime up from a wharf. From the top of the lane there are broad, sweeping views across the Severn Valley to the Breidden hills across the Welsh border. Protected by border castles in the early Middle Ages, when the agricultural character of this land was shaped, the landscape of this part of Shropshire changed little over the centuries. Even 25 years ago, Lime Lane passed through an intricate mosaic of scores of small fields and their network of hedges with many scattered coppice and spinney woods.

At that time a family from Kinton rented one of the smaller paddocks along the lane to plant a wood.

The idea of this new wood, of just over an acre, was to add something to the rich diversity of the landscape for the future. A variety of trees and shrubs were selected and carefully planted. With minimal interference, this little wood has developed over 25 years.

Within that time the surrounding landscape has changed more than at any time in its long history. All the little fields have been amalgamated, so that there are now two giant fields either side the lane — wheat or sugar beet as far as the eye can see. Hedges have been grubbed up, copse and spinney bulldozed, ponds filled in. Only a few isolated oak trees stick out like sore thumbs. The lane's hedges have been battered by flail mowers. Everything which characterised the old landscape has gone and been replaced by the brutal economics of intensive agriculture. Everything except the little wood.

The wood has no name and is not marked on the map. It's an eccentric mixture of native woodland and ornamental garden trees. It has remained in the care of the family that planted it and the next generation have begun the first tentative steps in working with their inheritance. The wood has become a memorial, not just to deceased parents but also for a landscape that has gone. A shared love of trees through generations will sustain it as a gift to the future.

Ten years ago, October 1987, a huge storm crashed through southern England. Lives were lost, property damaged and woodland flattened. Although this was not nearly of the same magnitude as the hurricane which hit Mexico, or the forest fires in Indonesia this October, it was a profound lesson to those who had continued to underestimate the power of nature. In the ensuing decade since the Great Storm, many lessons have been learnt.

The storm went through woodlands like a dose of salts — drastic medicine. Apart from learning about the power of natural regeneration and the importance of great disturbance in the development of woodland, the storm taught people to value their woods more.

So much has been lost in the last half of this century that measures have been taken to plant more woods. Unfortunately many tree-planting schemes end in failure because they are not cared for for long enough.

This makes this little wood in an obscure corner of Shropshire so much more important. To those who see the countryside as an agricultural shop floor, this wood is a blot on the landscape. To foresters it's too small and scruffy to be significant. To ecological purists it's a hotchpotch of natives and exotics of no conservation value. But it stands in defiance of the short-term greed that has battered the ecology and dehumanised much of the countryside. It bears witness to the historic landscape and stands as a symbol of hope for the future.

Chess Leonard Barden

MANY chess biographies only start when the subject is already a fully-fledged master, which doesn't help the reader who wants to improve his or her plebeian game to a more exalted level. John Nunn's new book, Secrets Of Grandmaster Chess (Batsford, £17.99), is a refreshing exception, starting with his early experiences of the *en passant* rule, the London under-12s, and putting rooks in front of passed pawns.

It includes 24 of his best and most instructive games with very detailed comments, anecdotes and advice on how to think at the board. Sometimes Nunn's reactions to outside events are flat (during Bobby Fischer v Boris Spassky "my Glorney Cup score was not very good") or reticent (as with what followed his 1981 visit to South Africa), but in general this is among the very best and most practically useful biographies. This win from London 1975 was his first against a grandmaster.

Nunn v Sigurjonsson

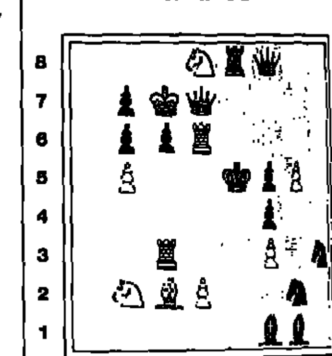
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6 5 Nc3 Qc7 6 g3 b5 7 Bg2 Bb7 8 0-0 d6 9 Re1 Bc7 10 a4 bxa4 11 Qh5! g6 12 Qe2 Nc6 13 Rxa4 Nxd4 14 Rxd4 Rc8 15 Bd2 Nf6 16 Bh6 Qb6 17 Rd3 Rc7 18 e5 dxe5 19 Bxb7 Rxb7 20 Qxe5 Qc7 21 Qxc7 Rxc7 22 Bg7 Rg8 23 Bxf6 Bxf6 24 Nd5 Bd8 25 Nxc7+ Bxc7 26 Red1 Resigns

Scotland's young players achieved two notable recent successes when Jonathan Rowson was silver medallist at the European Under-20 in Tallinn, Estonia, while Eddie Dearing, rated 2210 and aged 16, scored Scotland's youngest international master result at the World Under-18 in Erevan, Armenia. Here, Rowson proves well prepared when his opponent tries the British specialty opening, 2 Bg5.

Dumitrescu v Rowson

1 d4 Nf6 2 Bg5 Ne4 3 Bh4 c5 4 f3 g5! 5 fxe4 gxh4 6 e3 Bh6 7 Qd3 Nc6 8 c3 cxd4 9 exd4 Qb6 10 b3 e5 11 d5 Ne7 12 Nd2 d6 13 Qb5+ Bd7 14 Qxb6 axb6 15 Ngf3 h3 16 g3 0-0 17 Nc4 Nc8 18 Bd3 f5 19 0-0 fxe4 20 Bxe4 b5 21 Ncd2 Nb6 22 a3 Be3+ 23 Kh1 Rac8 24 Rac1 Bg4 25 Rc2 Nd7 26 c4 Nc5 27 Re1 Nxe4 28 Rxe3 Nxd2 29 Nxd2 Rf2 30 Re1 bxc4 31 Rec1 Bf5! 32 Resigns If 32 Rxc4 Rxc4 33 Nxc4 Be4+ 34 Kg1 Rg2+ 35 Kf1 Rxh2 wins easily.

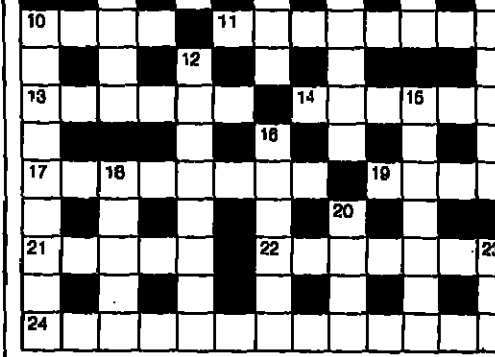
No 2495



White mates in two moves, against any defence (by M Mladenovic). This problem defeated many of the best problemists in the annual World Solving Championship at Pula, Croatia, where Jonathan Mestel scored a fine victory and the United Kingdom team was third. Mestel, a Cambridge academic and twice British champion, also achieved a unique double as the only grandmaster in both over-the-board chess and solving.

No 2494: 1 Kf4 Kb7 2 c5 dxc5 3 Ke5 g3 4 Kd6 g2 5 a8Q+ Kxa8 6 Kc7 g1Q 7 b7+, 8 b8Q+ and 9 Qb6 mate.

Quick crossword no. 389



Across

1 Deadlock (8-5)
8 Shortfall (7)
9 Accurate (5)
10 Bed — rubbish! (4)
11 Magician of The Tempest (8)
13 Short-lived insect (6)
14 Male beast (6)
17 Fragments from 10 down? (8)
19 Otters' den — Norfolk town (4)
21 Argentina-based musical (5)
22 Quality (7)
24 Junior NCO (5-8)

Down

1 Unhappy (3)
2 Extreme youth (7)
3 Strike with the foot (4)
4 Public official with legal duties (6)
5 What the butler saw? (8)
6 Public face — likeness (5)
7 Reprisal (3,3,3)
10 Nasty great surprise (9)
12 Slithering — distance from target (8)
15 Kit and stuff — hit hard! (7)
16 Adhesive strips (6)
18 Be monarch (5)
20 Fiasco (4)
23 Fish (3)

Last week's solution

		C	O	N	T	R	A	B	A	N	D	
B		A		O		A		A		E		
I	M	P	I	O	U	S		C	L	U	M	P
R		E		K		C		K		T		E
T	I	R	E		W	A	N	D	E	R	E	R
H				F		L		O		A		P
R	E	S	U	L	T		C	O	L	L	I	E
I		P		Y		T		R				T
G	A	I	N	S	A	I	D		S	P	U	R
H		N		H		S		J		H		A
T	R	A	C	E		S	C	A	R	L	E	T
		C		E		U		M		O		E
		C	H	A	T	T	E	R	B	O	X	

Bridge Zia Mahmood

THE bridge world last month lost one of its finest people when Edgar Kaplan, champion player, writer, commentator, administrator and, for 30 years, the editor of American Bridge World finally succumbed to the cancer that he had battled with remarkable courage for a considerable time.

His career stretched from the golden age of American bridge to the present day, and just a week before he died, he was still playing bridge at the very highest level during the United States National Championships in New Mexico.

My first encounter with Kaplan was at the 1980 World Team Olympiad in the Netherlands. Prior to making some vast overbid or other, I had announced to my opponents, by saying *"STOP"*, that I was about to make a jump bid. Kaplan, who was commentating, remarked: "Mahmood gave himself some good advice when he said *"STOP"*. But he paid no attention." At the Macallan tournament in 1996, history repeated itself, giving him another chance to exercise his wonderfully dry wit at my expense. When I was playing with Omar Sharif against Tony Forrester and Andrew Robson on Vugraph, the bidding went like this:

South	West	North	East
Zia	Robson	Omar	F'ster
			2♣(1)
Pass	2♦(2)	2♠	Pass
6♥	Double	All pass . . .	

(1) A strong hand, or a weak two bid in diamonds. (2) Pass if you are weak with diamonds.

Of course, I had been lurking in the bullrushes with my initial pass, but my leap to the six level was singularly unsuccessful, and we conceded an 800 penalty. Someone in the audience suggested that Omar's bid of two spades was partly to blame, since he was a little short on values. "No, no," said Kaplan. "Omar bid two spades because he thought he might make a few tricks if spades were trumps. He did not intend the call as a slam try in hearts."

Kaplan was chairman of the Laws Commission of the World Bridge Federation, and lived long enough to see the introduction of the 1997 Code of Laws under which the tournament game has been played in Britain since October 1. He was co-inventor, with Alfred Sheinwold, of the bidding system that bears their names and is used by thousands of successful American players. He had his own hugely complex system of hand evaluation, more accurate by some way than the standard 4-3-2-1 point count, but too difficult for anyone without a mathematics degree to apply. He would say of a hand that it contained "11.61 Kaplan points — not quite enough to open, but if you had the 9,8 of spades instead of the 7,6, you'd have enough".

As an administrator, Kaplan tolerated the rising tide of highly artificial bidding that threatens to render the top-level game inaccessible to the average player, but personally he did not approve of it. "I don't think anyone in this tournament can bid diamonds to show diamonds," he once said. "We lost the club suit in the 1950s. Now the diamonds are gone, and the hearts are sinking fast."

One of his close friends remarked that he was "a true gentleman, always managing to say or do exactly the right thing". Edgar Kaplan's influence on the game while he lived was enormous, and his legacy will remain for as long as the game he loved is played with skill, with sportsmanship and, above all, with humour.

Is there still a readership for creative English fiction, asks **Stephen Moss**, the Guardian's literary editor

Prize concern

THE cheers that greeted Arundhati Roy's Booker Prize triumph last week cannot disguise the fact that this has been a disastrous year for the award. Old Booker-watchers say that every year has its share of disasters — shortlist rubbished, members of the jury publically disagreeing with the result, amateurish presentation — but this year hasn't even been interestingly disastrous. It has been profoundly depressing.

This was, as pretty well everyone except the jury agree, an unexciting shortlist. Leave aside the fact that the literary heavy-hitters — McEwan, Banville, Shields — were ignored. That is perfectly legitimate if the books that are chosen are clearly the best of the year. But there was no sense that the panel really supported this list: each judge backed one or two books and pitched for those. The result was a set of individual choices, rather than a collectively agreed list. It had no credibility.

It had no saleability either: bookshops were disappointed by the list and, for all the dumpbins and promotional material, sales were grim. The death of the novel is an endlessly replayed, boringly clichéd subject, but any objective observer of the events surrounding this year's Booker would have to conclude that fiction was in a parlous state. Breathing, but only just.

The Booker has to be reformed and suggestions are already coming forward about how that should be done. I would like to champion one and, having talked to leading booksellers, believe it could be done. A rule should be introduced whereby the publishers of all shortlisted titles agree to have their work paperbacked instantly, so that the whole shortlist was available in an accessible, affordable edition. Let readers — not academics, or critics, or literary editors — decide which they like and what they hope will win.

This has been a non-battle fought in a vacuum: no one reading, no one caring. The Booker is supposed to be the showcase for British and Commonwealth fiction: it needs to be transparently more rigorous, and much more vigorous in the way it sells itself to the public. The panel is drawn from too narrow a circle; it is too establishment, too lit-crit. The era of celebrity judges — it did always seem to be a beautiful blonde — was derided, but there are surely outsiders who would generate interest and excitement, who would help to evangelise without diluting the prize's critical lustre.

The Booker's dismal reception this year should be an opportunity for publishers, booksellers and critics to reassess both the prize and the way that fiction is sold to the public. If the fiction market is dwindling, that is a cause for concern. More likely is that the market is diversifying, and the tastes of the literary establishment and the reading public are getting even wider. That too poses important questions. Why does genre fiction barely merit a mention, even in discussions of what might be on the longlist? Why are popular writers like Iain Banks so under-represented on the list?

All these are questions which need to be urgently addressed, because the problems of the prize represent, in microcosm, the problems facing the selling of creative writing in Britain. As a representative of the Library Association said to me recently, we have plenty of writers; now we need to find some readers.

Arundhati Roy: winning with her first novel PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM JEPSON

As for the winning author, we have to extend some sympathy. Having been saddled with the hype of her large advance, she now finds her book overshadowed by some of the larger questions affecting the prize.

The God Of Small Things, a moving novel about two twins growing up in Kerala, is ambitious, whimsical and offers an intimate and revealing portrait of the caste system in modern India. The twins' mother has an affair with an Untouchable, who is beaten to death by the police. That is not the only tragedy to touch the twins' life — worst of all, they are eventually compelled to separate after being implicated in the drowning of a companion.

Despite the grim catalogue of events, there is an undercurrent of humour, and Roy aims at a kind of tragi-comedy. Unfortunately, her lush style and tendency to overwrite do not enable her to achieve her undoubtedly ambitious plan. She has been compared to Naipaul and Rushdie, but such comparisons are the fantasies of publicists. Her victory will not be enough to satisfy the Booker's growing band of critics.

This year's Booker shortlist comprised: Quarantine by Jim Crace (Viking, £16.99); Grace Notes by Bernard MacLaverty (Cape, £14.99); The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy (Flamingo, £15.99); Europa by Tim Parks (Secker & Warburg, £9.99); The Essence of the Thing by Madeleine St John (Fourth Estate, £9.99); The Underground Man by Mick Jackson (Picador, £15.99)

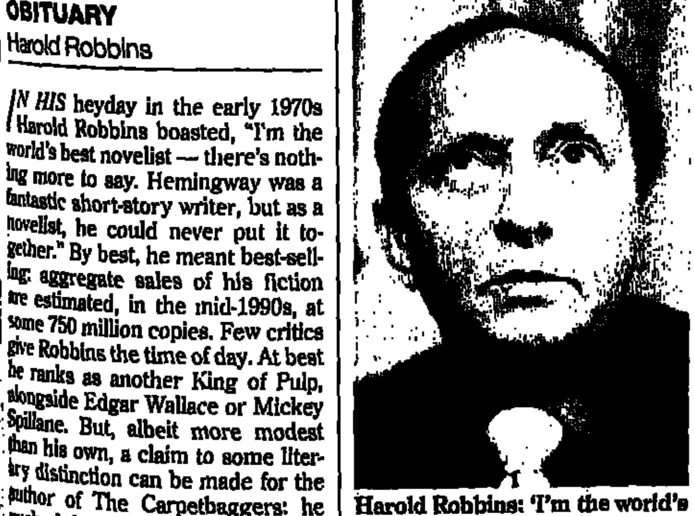
Sex, schlock and spectacular sales

OBITUARY
Harold Robbins

IN HIS heyday in the early 1970s Harold Robbins boasted, "I'm the world's best novelist — there's nothing more to say. Hemingway was a fantastic short-story writer, but as a novelist, he could never put it together." By best, he meant best-selling: aggregate sales of his fiction are estimated, in the mid-1990s, at some 750 million copies. Few critics give Robbins the time of day. At best he ranks as another King of Pulp, alongside Edgar Wallace or Mickey Spillane. But, albeit more modest than his own, a claim to some literary distinction can be made for the author of The Carpetbaggers: he pushed forward the boundaries of the sexually permissible for Anglo-American fiction in the 1960s (thus clearing ground for writers of quality) and, early in his career, he wrote a couple of good novels.

It is, however, for his very bad novels that Robbins, who has died aged 81, will be remembered. The best known are *romans-à-clefs* and his own early life formed the basis of one of them (A Stone For Danny Fisher) in 1952. Six years later it was filmed, starring Elvis Presley as Fisher/Robbins.

The outlines of Robbins's life, as he has often and lovingly recalled them, do not ring entirely true; but he remained remarkably faithful to the account. He was born illegitimate and shortly thereafter deposited as a foundling at a New York Catholic orphanage, where he was given the name Francis Kane (It was passed on to the hero of his first novel, Never Love A Stranger, 1948).



Harold Robbins: 'I'm the world's best novelist' PHOTO: NEIL LIBBERT

His parentage was unknown, although, according to his agent, Paul Gitlin, Robbins discovered that his father was Jewish. A difficult inmate (he apparently earned his pocket money running errands for whores and giving dirty old men hand-jobs in burlesque theatres), young Francis was boarded out to a series of foster parents.

When he was formally adopted by a Manhattan Jewish pharmacist in 1927, he took the name Harold Rubin. "Robbins" evolved as his *nom de plume* when he began publishing fiction late in the 1940s. Rubin attended George Washington High School, in New York City, for four years, which represented the sum total of his formal education.

As he tells it, Harold Rubin left home aged 15. He supposedly lied about his age and spent two years in the US Navy. It was now the Depression (a formative influence on his subsequent fiction) and on his return to civilian life in New York, it was in wholesale grocery that he had his first break. By playing the crop futures market, Robbins claims to have made himself a millionaire by the age of 20. Now rich, he married Lillian Machnivitz in 1937 (there was one daughter, Caryn). Three years after making his fortune he lost it all in 1939 by speculating in sugar.

Bankrupted, Rubin took a job as a clerk in the New York warehouse of Universal Pictures (why he was not drafted into the armed forces is unknown). As a reward for his having uncovered a gigantic scam, a grateful studio made him executive director of budgets and planning. Rubin now began writing — allegedly his career was launched with a $100 bet that he could produce something better than the turkeys the studio's story department were coming up with.

His first novel, Never Love a Stranger, written in the James T Farrell naturalistic style, was published under the prestigious Knopf imprint in 1948. It received respectful reviews. The Dream Merchants (1949) is a Hollywood novel, drawing on inside knowledge gained at Universal. There followed the best of his early works, chronicling a Jewish boy's coming of age in New York, A Stone For Danny Fisher.

This trio of early novels predicted a career like Irwin Shaw's or Herman Wouk's, but, in Mario Puzo's memorable phrase, Robbins determined to grow up and sell out.

There followed the glitzy "sex-and-violence" novels Never Leave Me (1953) and 79 Park Avenue (1953, filmed 1969). High life, the Mafia, and fast cars figure prominently. Knopf dropped him (after 1966, Robbins joined Simon & Schuster). He was, apparently, fired from Universal in the late 1950s for absenteeism. There were other crises; his first marriage was on the rocks. He would subsequently, in the 1960s, marry a second wife, Grace Palermo, by whom he had another daughter, Adreanna.

Worldwide fame came in 1961 with The Carpetbaggers. It was the fifth bestselling novel of the year in the US. A fantasia on the life and loves of reclusive tycoon Howard Hughes, it exploited to the sado-sexual full the new freedoms created by the American and British Lady Chatterley trials of 1959-60. The scene in which the villain is identified by a tobacco pouch he made from the severed breast of the hero's raped mother is a kind of *ne plus ultra* for the period.

IN 1964 The Carpetbaggers was made into an expensive and stinkingly bad film starring George Peppard and Alan Ladd. Oddly the best of the Robbins adaptations — Nevada Smith, a 1966 movie starring Steve McQueen — drew on elements in the early part of The Carpetbaggers. Robbins followed up with Where Love Has Gone (1962), based on the Lana Turner/Johnny Stompanato Mafia murder scandal. The Adventurers (1966) is set in Central America, and was loosely based on the life of Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo. It inspired a 1970 film of the same name. The Inheritors (1969) and The Betsy (1971), suggested that Robbins's production was becoming increasingly formulaic. The Pirate (1974) was the routine *roman-à-clef*, this time based on the international arms-dealer and jet-setter, Adnan Khashoggi.

Like Khashoggi, Robbins — now rich beyond his dreams — was developing a taste for the Riviera lifestyle. In 1969, he acquired his prize possession, an 85ft yacht, Gracara. He flaunted his Rolls-Royces, his love of Las Vegas gambling and showgirls, his Lear jet, and his playboy lifestyle. He acquired expensive homes in Cannes, Beverly Hills, Acapulco. Robbins had become the hero of a Harold Robbins novel.

Always professional, his stream of fiction continued unabated: The Lonely Lady (1976), Dreams Die Fast (1977), Memories Of Another Day (1979), Goodbye Janette (1981), Spellbinder (1982) — the tide of schlock rolled on, inexorably and profitably.

In April 1982, Robbins suffered a minor stroke. He also met Jann Stapp, who became his third wife on his divorce from his second in 1992. Other physical problems (notably a broken and badly mended hip) led to Robbins retiring to a quieter mode of life in Palm Springs.

The novels continued, although they now only figured, if at all, on the fringes of the bestseller lists. Descent From Xanadu (1984), The Story Teller (1985), Piranhas (1986) duly came and went, without making any stir. His last two novels, The Raiders (1995) and The Stallion (1996) are sequels to The Betsy and The Carpetbaggers respectively. Both have been suspected of being co-written by other hands.

Robbins leaves his wife and two daughters by previous marriages.

John Sutherland

Harold Robbins, novelist, born May 21, 1916; died October 14, 1997

Family snaps

Phillip Knightley

Magnum: Fifty Years at the Frontline of History
by Russell Miller
Secker & Warburg 324pp £16.99

LET'S face it. Has anyone ever met a modest, generous, self-effacing, co-operative photographer, someone unsure of their talent, fulsome in their praise for their colleagues, who eschews jealousy and intrigue, and is delighted with the space and display that editors provide them? Given that such a bird is rare, it must rank as a miracle that Magnum, the international photo agency, has survived to celebrate its 50th birthday. As this cleverly constructed book — a labour of love if ever there was one — makes clear, the very idea of an agency run by its own photographers is a prescription for professional, financial and personal disaster.

For a glimpse into Magnum's complex world and proof of Russell Miller's dedication to his task, read the problems he encountered in writing this book. The French members were annoyed that he was not French. Others did not like the idea that a writer rather than a photographer should do the book. And then there were the traditional Magnum disputes and rivalries, some going back decades, into which Miller innocently intruded.

One photographer says he not only did not want to be interviewed but that he did not want other Magnum members to talk to Miller about him. Cornell Capa, keeper of his brother Robert's reputation, considered Miller's questions insulting, so after three sessions with him, Miller gave up. Henri Cartier-Bresson, the sole surviving founder member, began the interview by announcing that he hated talking about photography.



Events in Paris, 1968, by Magnum's Bruno Barbey

Let's eavesdrop on Magnum's annual meeting in Paris last year. At most such meetings, there are walkouts, insults, screaming arguments, and near fist-fights. But this one was fairly decorous. A letter was read out from Cartier-Bresson, who was sick and could not attend. "Magnum is a community of thought, a shared human quality, a curiosity about what is going on in the world . . . and a desire to transcribe it visually. That is why the group has survived. That's what holds it together." Elliott Erwitt thought about this for a moment. "Sure, we're a family," he said. "That's why we tear each other's throats out."

Magnum was founded by Cartier-Bresson, a Frenchman; Robert Capa, a Hungarian; David Seymour, a Pole; and George Rodger, an Englishman. It was Capa, who had often talked during and after the Spanish civil war about forming "a brotherhood of photojournalists", who had the idea and made it happen.

Before television eroded the market for Magnum's style of photojournalism, before Americans lost their curiosity about the world, Magnum created some of the finest images ever seen of man and his triumphs and follies. At their peak, Magnum photographers invested their calling with purpose, self-respect and dignity, managing by planning and good luck to be present at most of history's turning points during the past 50 years.

But in their success lay the seeds of their decline. What, exactly, were they doing? Was it journalism or art, essence or design? Cartier-Bresson insisted it was art and said he looked for visual coherence with fragmentary instances, what he called "the organic co-ordination of elements as seen by the eye". Capa's creed was that "the truth is the best picture" and that what he did was photojournalism.

Arguments between the two schools were often heated and sometimes created lasting bitterness, but the photojournalism school seems to have been on top most of the time. It is hard to argue that war photojournalism does not matter when Philip Jones Griffiths's book, Vietnam Inc., brought him an enormous mailbag of letters from all over the United States, the main thrust of which was, "My God, we're killing people we should be emulating." All this distracted Magnum and its photographers from what should really have been concerning them — the assault from television. Today they are no longer important, romantic figures making lots of money. Today the romance goes to the television cameraman and the money to the paparazzi.

Where this leaves Magnum, no one dares predict. Cornell Capa told the author, "Do you think I'm crazy enough to tell you what I think about the future of Magnum. They've fumbled along for 50 years, they'll probably continue fumbling for another 50." Perhaps.

Paperbacks Nicholas Lezard

The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, by Charles Rosen (Faber, £25)

THAT price tag includes a CD of Rosen himself playing Beethoven's Hammerklavier and Op 110 sonatas. Even if it didn't, the book would be worth it. A new edition of a work first published in 1970, this is a landmark of creative criticism that should be read by anyone interested in expanding their understanding of any art, and not just of the subject under discussion. Of course, some faint knowledge of the composers is important, but even a dilettante like myself is going to come away with something.

The book is written with such inclusiveness, and such bracing rigour, that it is impossible not to be both charmed and bowled over by Rosen's perceptions. How can you fail to trust someone who says this? "'Expression' is a word that tends to corrupt thought. Applied to art, it is only a necessary metaphor. Accepted as legal tender, it often gives aid and comfort to those who are more interested in the artist's personality than in his work." Sibelius said that no one ever put up a statue of a critic; well, someone should make an exception for Rosen.

Death on Credit, by Louis-Ferdinand Céline, trs and int Ralph Manheim (Calder, £13.99)

ONE of the more feeble-minded delusions of the times is that literature is noble, redemptive and purifying, like some kind of water filter for the soul. Read this, then. Céline was a monster, and this is a monstrous book, a pitiless, comic nightmare. After writing it he became a disgusting anti-Semite, as if he had driven himself mad; he had enough self-knowledge to know how vile he was. Manheim's is an improvement on the original translation, which came out in 1938, but it's already 30 years old, and shows it. We need a new translation badly, but this will have to do for now.

Bodies of Work: Essays, by Kathy Acker (Serpent's Tail, £11)

FROM her preface: "When the publishers of this book asked me to write a preface, I replied, 'I'm not sure I like my essays'." Well, I'm not sure either. But Acker's suspicion could be a matter of her bemusement at writing something with a definite form and shape, an intellectual rather than emotional addressing of the issues. Not that there is all that much of that going on. It's a shame she's so conceited, for she can throw up illuminating insights; she just can't be bothered to string them together professionally.

No Sweat: Fashion, Free Trade, and the Rights of Garment Workers, ed Andrew Ross (Verso, £14)

IN 1990, an advert placed in a US trade magazine by a Salvadoran organisation promised labour costs of 57 cents an hour. In 1991, the same ad promised 33 cents an hour. People in Haiti work at sub-subsistence levels to produce T-shirts for Disney. And not only is the pay shit, but there is a good chance you will be sexually harassed and fired for complaining. Read all about it.

The Avengers Companion, by Alain Carrazé and Jean-Luc Putheaud (Titan, £14.99)

YES, check out the authors' names: it was originally a French book, about the show known over there as Chapeau melon et bottes de cuir ("Bowler hat and leather boots", rather charming, n'est-ce pas?). Plot synopses of every episode, lots of pictures of Steed and his chapeau melon and Diana Rigg's bottes de cuir. Readers of a sensitive disposition are advised not to look at the pictures from pp 88-95, which show Joanna Lumley's dreadful bob and Gareth Hunt.

The Good Pub Guide 1998, ed Alisdair Aird (Ebury Press, £14.99)

IT IS CAMRA who started the revolution, and they who should be thanked; for without them a book called "the good pub guide" would have been about 20 pages long, instead of nearly 1,000, like this one. If I may make two London-based observations: 1. The Anglesea Arms in Hammersmith may do great food, but its beer is a disgrace; and 2. My friend Toby, who runs on Wadworth 6X the way cars run on petrol, would be most alarmed to read that the Ladbroke Arms sells no such beer; when, as a matter of fact, it does.

Character assassination

Lucretia Stewart

A Certain Justice
by P D James
Faber 390pp £15.99

P D JAMES'S previous novel, Original Sin, was set in the world of publishing. An imaginary firm inhabited a wonderful palazzo on the river. It was a nice idea (at least until people started dying), if somewhat unconvincing to those of us familiar with the realities of modern publishing. Now James has turned her attention to the world of the law.

Venetia Aldridge QC is found dead in her Middle Temple chambers just four weeks after defending Garry Ashe. Ashe, a nasty piece of work, had been accused of the brutal murder of his aunt. Thanks to Venetia, he got off and promptly rewarded his saviour by taking up with her daughter, Octavia (unloved and unlovable), for reasons that had little to do with love or even lust. Step forward Adam Dalgliesh, James's cool, sensitive, poetry-writing detective, who, over the years, has neither married nor apparently grown older.

James's ornate, portentous prose is perfectly suited to the legal world — or what we imagine the legal world to be. Its meandering pomposity and arcane rituals have found their ideal voice in James, whom, one senses, feels happy and at home here.

She has always been a writer for whom order is supremely important. Here is an intensely British world, an old-fashioned universe in which, ideally, a moral order prevails and justice, even the "certain" (that is to say, unorthodox) justice of the title, triumphs.

The problem with A Certain Justice, however fluent and competent it may be, is that James's vision of how the world should be dominates to the exclusion of all else. She deals with the changes in our society by resisting them. Dalgliesh has ceased to be a proper character; his lack of development seems proof of the degree to which James has abandoned him. Instead he has become a symbol who stands for right (as opposed to wrong). James, now a Conservative peer, has thankfully resisted any temptation to make him a supporter of the right.

Seemingly lacking the imagination to bring her characters to life, she tries to compensate for this lack by intricate plotting. You don't need to have read Bleak House to suspect that the legal world might be complex and labyrinthine, but it has surely to be a failure on the part of a mystery writer (James disdains this title) for the reader to be left unsure as to the identity of the murderer.

Like Original Sin, A Certain Justice is overlong and overelaborate. By the time the end comes — not so much a denouement as a resolution — the reader is weary. I found myself longing for the speed and wit of Agatha Christie, another very English writer, with whom James has often and erroneously been compared; a comparison she apparently does not relish. She should be so lucky.

Between worlds

George Steiner

Albert Camus — A Life
by Olivier Todd
Chatto & Windus 435pp £20

THE general facts of Camus's biography have long been known. The aura of legend has been established. After a period of relative eclipse, a number of Camus's works today rank among the most read and translated in 20th century literature. They are school-syllabus classics but continue to interest and move adult readers. With Saint-Exupéry (a not altogether anomalous pairing), Camus is a best-seller still. Oliver Todd's biography provides a richly informed tale.

Camus's childhood in and around Algiers was marked by the very early death of his father and a regimen of women struggling with near-poverty. Camus's mother was illiterate. Inborn talent, tenacity, and a system of school bursaries, these being one of the true glories of the Third Republic, allowed Albert to acquire a solid education. What mattered most, however, were two forces. Merely to live in Camus's marginal circumstance was to experience the full tensions of Franco-Algerian relations. These were slowly but inexorably gathering towards a tragic confrontation. Camus's leitmotif, that of social justice, of the pestilential insinuations into everyday personal lives of political hatreds, of racial distrust, was present from the start. With that awareness came an ironic rejection of those utopian social theories so often imperceptive of the resistant grit of actual human needs.

The second shaping element was that of the Mediterranean light and climate. That knife-edged light, the pools of inky shadow, the hot breath out of the desert and, above all, the kaleidoscope of the sea and its beaches, informed Camus's sensibility. Even before tuberculosis became a recurrent vexation and, indeed, life-threatening condition, Camus sought out the white sun, the intense tints of his Algerian childhood. It is this radiance and the abrupt blackness which can follow Mediterranean sunsets, in Algiers, in Spain, in the Midi, which were to inspire Camus's finest work. Complementarily, it is the dank gloom of a Flemish north which gives the late monologue, La Chute, its desolation.

The gifted are economical in their choice of masters. The young Camus found his way directly to Nietzsche, to Gide and to Malraux. Later on, he was to discover Faulkner. But the most immediate influence was that of his mentor and friend, Jean Grenier. It was he who nursed Camus's nascent vocation. From the age of 18, Camus began publishing literary and journalistic work in the Algerian press. Incensed by the colonialist humiliations of the Arabs, Camus enrolled for two years in the Communist Party. Already surrounded by young women in the relaxed ambience of radical politics, café life and those Mediterranean midnights, Camus married disastrously and wrote a thesis so as to qualify for a teaching post.

It is with Camus's increasing commitment to metropolitan France that Todd's narrative gathers pace. Camus had re-married, an alliance fraught with separations and conflicts, but finally lasting. On May 1, 1940, he completed L'Étranger; shortly thereafter, the play Caligula, and the philosophic essay on The Myth Of Sisyphus lay more or less ready. At the age of 27, Camus had composed a masterpiece of fiction and an allegory which was to inflect the mood of his times. Together, these three texts gave the term "the absurd" its enormous vogue and resonance. More and more involved in the theatre, shadowed by tuberculosis, pouring out political-cultural articles for dailies and diverse periodicals, Camus had already acquired a considerable name. And a resplendent mistress, the actress Maria Casares.

Todd is a virtuoso chronicler of Parisian intellectual-erotic labyrinths. His Camus reminds us of a crucial truth. If one were not unfortunate enough to be a Jew, if one's engagement in the Resistance was discreet or tardy, the life of literati, artists and the intelligentsia in occupied Paris could be very stimulating indeed. Claudel, Montherlant, and Anouilh turned out major works. Picasso painted superbly.

L'Étranger was published to acclaim in 1942. With a bit of luck and patronage, one could travel to the beloved south, put on plays and, after Stalingrad, prepare for liberation. As Sartre confided to Mme de Beauvoir, Paris had never been so attractive, and all manner of undesirable bores had vanished. It was between 1941 and 1946 that Camus laboured, on and off, on the manuscript which was to become La Peste (the book appeared in June 1947). In contrast to Sartre, Camus did enter clandestine journalism, via Le Combat, and performed ancillary services in the Resistance. His numerous liaisons provided a scattering of safe houses. As Todd puts it: "Camus grew accustomed to romantic conquest, knowing it was essentially trivial." Don Juanism kept at bay the menace in his lungs.

The Camus-Sartre relationship was one of the most complex and, at times, dramatic in literary-philosophic history. Todd's account is unavoidably anecdotal. But the issues of ideology and style lay deep, and came to personify the troubled spirit of the age. The two men valued each other's gifts, passionate intellectuality and political engagement during the immediate pre-war years and occupation (Camus had reviewed Sartre's fiction already in 1939). They collaborated closely on the celebrated journal, Les Temps Modernes. Early on, however, Camus bridled at the persistent rubric: "existentialism's number two". Sartre, in turn, kept an increasingly wary eye on Camus's ascent to celebrity and sales. When La Peste was published, he was heard to remark that "Albert Camus was no genius". The fated conflict sprang from Camus's rejection of systematic Marxism in the late forties and early fifties (L'Homme Révolté, his main tract on sceptical humanism, on privacy and fundamentally liberal persuasions, appeared in November 1952). It opted for the personalised "Mediterranean thought" of Plato and Saint Augustine as against the chill dogma of Hegel or Marx.

Sartre let slip his dogs of war; his acolytes poured scorn on Camus's amateurish philosophising, on his bourgeois chatter. Camus riposted with understandable bitterness. When the Nobel came in October 1957 — Camus was not yet 44 — Sartre observed, with caustic brevity: "He deserves it." Camus spoke of refusing the prize, but accepted it. Sartre said that he would refuse it, and did so. As one looks back, the decencies, the thirst for justice, are very much on Camus's side of the equation. The sheer genius, the philosophic importance, remain with Sartre.

INCREASINGLY, Camus was obsessed by the Algerian catastrophe. His stance was complicated and unresolved. It was that of a witness to the tragic condition of the poorer whites among French colonists, of one who had always dreamt of concord between Arab and Frenchman. Forced to choose between the safety of his mother and abstract justice or justified reprisal, Camus, in a famous aphorism, chose his mother. The Sartrian left derided Camus's vacillations, his refusal of uniform solutions. Even global celebrity and the love of women did not really assuage the inward solitude of Camus's last years. Suicide came to haunt him, just as it had in Sisyphus.

How does Camus's stature strike one today? His foremost achievement is L'Etranger. He placed it distinctly higher than La Peste, which does seem, by comparison, a middle-brow classic. Some of the essays, for example on capital punishment, continue to ring true. On the whole, however, the journalism and "tracts for the times" have not worn well. The plays, a life-long ambition, are inert. It is, perhaps, Camus the man who impresses himself most vividly on remembrance. Todd brings this image to poignant presence. He died when the car in which he was travelling crashed into a tree on January 3, 1960. Camus had found the necessary word: *absurde*.

Albert Camus: suicide came to haunt him

Close encounters behind the bike shed

Marcus Berkmann

Moab Is My Washpot
by Stephen Fry
Hutchinson 343pp £16.99

STEPHEN FRY doesn't much like critics, and in recent times critics haven't much liked Stephen Fry. His fantastically well-publicised retreat a couple of years ago from the West End production of Simon Gray's Cell Mates, after a spate of poorish reviews, received its worst review of all in Gray's waspish memoir Fat Chance, since when a general critical backlash has magically coalesced. Now anyone with a typewriter who considers Fry "too clever by half" feels free to give him a good kicking. The last TV series of Fry and Laurie was duly savaged, as was his third and most ambitious novel Making History, whose hardback sales, hardly surprisingly, failed to emulate those of its two predecessors. A career previously unblemished by failure was suddenly falling apart. Many smaller talents were delighted.

Too clever by half: the ultimate English sin. No doubt Fry will get it in the neck for writing his autobiography, always a bold move for a 40-year-old. And yet in many ways it's the obvious thing to do. The Cell Mates débâcle seems to have affected Fry deeply, and to some extent caused him to reassess his life. Here was a successful man, beloved by friends and family, as famous and rich as anyone could hope to be, and yet trapped by crippling emotional reticence and damagingly low self-esteem. It's a classic English story, especially if you went to a public school, and one Fry clearly felt compelled to tell.

Moab Is My Washpot is not, therefore, autobiography as self-aggrandisement, or even autobiography as self-revelation, for much of it has appeared in various forms before. No, this is autobiography as therapy, an attempt by Fry to explain to the world (and presumably also to himself) just how he came to be in this mess. It covers only the first 21 years of his life, but as readers of The Liar will attest, these were undoubtedly the most action-packed 21 years. The path is clear: precocious youth, possessed of a stunning fluency with language; early bike-shed escapades; a Grand Passion for a fellow 14-year-old; and then a grim, seemingly relentless slide into delinquency and juvenile crime. P G Wodehouse once wrote a story called "Jeeves and the Impending Doom", which would sum this book up perfectly.

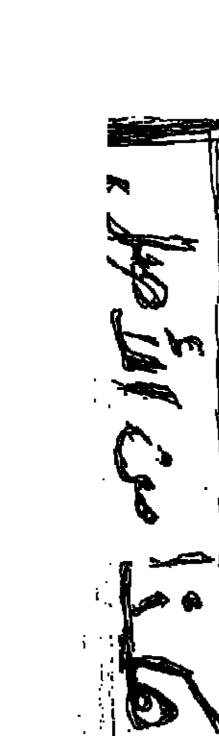
Fry, being Fry, lards his tale with innumerable jokes and verbal felicities: some of his bursts of simile take the breath away. The other side of this coin is his tendency to babble. One brief and droll passage about being beaten at school soon turns into a three-page non-argument on the pros and cons of corporal punishment. "Bloody hell, I do rattle on, don't I?" he says later on, and few readers will disagree.

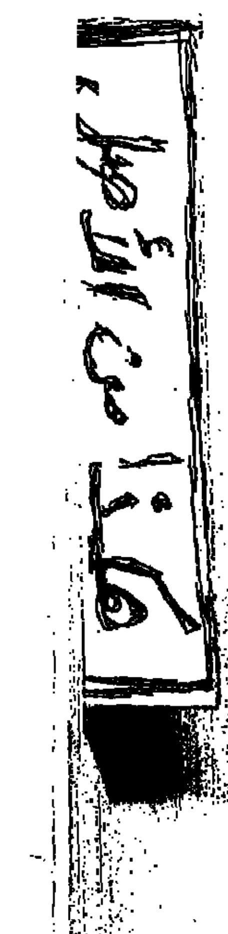
And yet, beneath these outbursts of flummery, this is a dignified and serious piece of work. If The Liar gave us the Fry childhood in the form of scabrous, self-mocking comedy, Moab Is My Washpot tells it more or less straight. Fry is still sound on such significant aspects of sixties childhood as Trebor Fruit Salads and Blackjacks, but the book's most vivid passages are almost entirely joke-free.

He writes superbly about his family, about his homosexuality, about the agonies of childhood. He wanted so much to be able to swim or sing in tune or play sport without humiliating himself. But all he could do was talk and talk, out-talking everyone and eventually talking himself into more and more trouble. It's almost ghoulish to watch him progress from stealing the odd handful of coins from changing rooms to full-blooded raids on matron's handbag, and thence to the dismal credit card frauds that give him a brief taste of prison life at the age of 18. Here, it seems, was the disastrous adolescence to cap them all. When he attempts suicide on page 302, you are almost surprised that it took him so long.

Curiously, Fry never blames anyone, other than of course himself. Most other autobiographers, relating such a hopeless tale, would have been sure to cast everyone else in the worst possible light. But Fry is consistently generous in his judgments. Even the public school system, which has traditionally dealt with individuality in the same way that swatters deal with flies, remains free of criticism. Fry takes on all responsibility for his actions, and yet somehow manages to elude self-pity. "I'm not moaning," he insists. "I'm trying to recapture an old misery and unravel it."

If this sounds a little like hard work, it's not, if only because Fry retains his light touch even in the most desperate of circumstances. He can be sentimental, self-indulgent, slapdash and often needlessly polysyllabic, but you forgive him everything because his heart is so obviously in the right place. And that's the crucial difference between Moab Is My Washpot and his previous books: It has heart.





Golf Alfred Dunhill Cup

Revenge is sweet for South Africa

David Davies

SIX years after Sweden, with no sense of occasion, won the 1991 Alfred Dunhill Cup, South Africa deservedly had their revenge at St Andrews last Sunday. They beat the Swedes 2-1 to win the cup for the first time, having been beaten in a play-off in 1991, the year South Africa re-entered world sport.

On that occasion Gary Player, aged 55, was called upon to lead his team and, at the death, was called upon to play extra holes, on which the result depended. Mats Lanner, without any due deference, birdied the first extra hole and sentiment was denied.

This time, though, South Africa were in charge from the start. A morning of flat, sunny calm, during which Joakim Haeggman went to the turn in 27 — Sweden beat the United States 2-1 and South Africa beat New Zealand by the same margin — was followed by more typical October weather. By mid-afternoon hands were in pockets, woolly bobble hats were on heads and scoring had returned to normal.

Despite being less accustomed to such things than their opponents, Retief Goosen (out in 34) and Ernie Els (33) were never behind Jesper Parnevik and Haeggman respectively, which meant that David Frost, who was never in front of Per-Ulrik Johansson, had little to worry about.

Johansson, like Goosen, won all his five matches in this event, and the Swede over the past few weeks has looked like the seriously good player he promised to be when he joined the tour in 1991. He beat Davis Love III in the Ryder Cup singles and last week defeated Brad Faxon and Steve Elkington among others.

Goosen, too, is beginning to fulfil the promise he clearly showed when he won the 1992 Qualifying School but which has been relatively submerged until this year.

Sweden's path to the final was eased by the quite remarkable performance of Haeggman who, in beating Justin Leonard by four shots, was at one time 10 ahead of the Open champion. The Swede went to the turn in a barely credible 27, nine under par, equalling the world record set by six others.

Haeggman birdied the 1st, parred the 2nd and then holed a 133-yard wedge shot for an eagle at the 3rd. He proceeded to birdie the remaining six holes as a sense of astonishment was gradually replaced by disbelief.

Leonard, who was level par at the turn, and nine behind, said: "I saw a lot of putts go in today, but the trouble was it wasn't me standing over the ball."

When Leonard bogeyed the 11th to go 10 behind with seven to play, only a miracle could have changed the result, but it is not easy to play while protecting such a large lead. At the back of the mind is the thought that to lose from such a position would be utterly unforgivable, and caution often results. "I played safe all the way in," said Haeggman afterwards, even after he had driven into the gorse at the 12th and lost a ball.

It was at that moment that any thought of a 59 was dispelled, although Haeggman, who on Saturday against Australia had come home in 33, thus playing 18 consecutive holes on the Old Course in 60, offered the thought that a 27 out proves that it is possible to get round in 54.

There were to be no more birdies and for some incomprehensible reason the Swede, after a perfect drive, aimed his second shot straight at the Road Hole bunker, the only place whence he could possibly lose the match. By now his lead was down to five; taking that number to get out of the "trap for the snap", as it is sometimes known since the Royal and Ancient installed a camera in its face for the 1995 Open, is by no means unknown.

Luckily for Haeggman, his ball finished nine feet short of the sand and, with halves of 27-41, he had compiled one of the more unusual 68s at St Andrews.

Earlier, England and Scotland, without winning a match between them, bowed out. South Africa beat Scotland 2-0 and the United States defeated England 3-0.



Cup that cheers . . . from left, Els, Frost and Goosen PHOTO: STEVE MORTON

Rugby Union

Lynagh has the last kick

Robert Armstrong

SARACENS threw down the gauntlet to every club in the Premiership with a mould-breaking victory over the defending champions Wasps in a dynamic London derby at Loftus Road last Sunday. Saracens join Newcastle, the only other side with a 100 per cent record, at the top of the Premiership One table.

Ryan Constable, Saracens' new Australian wing, scored the game's only try and his compatriot Michael Lynagh did much to secure the win with a conversion and four penalty goals, three of them in the final quarter. It was Wasps' first defeat in eight games this season and Saracens' second victory over their London rivals in 11 years of league competition.

"We are delighted we pipped Wasps at the post," said Saracens' coach and flanker Francois Pienaar, who paid special tribute to Lynagh for overturning Wasps' 15-10 lead. "It's not often that people come here and win. We want to build confidence by developing the winning habit."

Lawrence Dallaglio, the Wasps captain, admitted that Saracens deserved to win. "I'm personally disappointed at the way we played," he said.

After Lynagh and Wasps' Gareth Rees each got off the mark with an early exchange of short-range penalty goals, Saracens manufactured a try that owed everything to the slick handling of Philippe Sella and Brendan Daniel. Constable timed his diagonal run from the right touchline to perfection, wrong-footing a couple of defenders as he powered over.

Three minutes earlier, Daniel had committed an embarrassing gaffe, making a flashy swallow-dive over the line and failing to touch down properly. It rather spoiled his 90-metre break down the left touchline and was an error Saracens might have lived to regret. Before half-time Rees slotted home three more penalty goals to give Wasps a 12-10 interval lead.

Wasps' Nick Greenstock enhanced his England claims with a number of storming midfield breaks, Alex King supplied subtle brushwork and the more experienced Lynagh tested the hosts with intelligent kicking.

Saracens, though, found it difficult to recapture their early driving momentum after half-time as the Wasps back row increased their share of usable ball from the rucks and mauls. Rees and Lynagh exchanged penalties again before, with 13 minutes left, Saracens eased into a 16-15 lead through Lynagh's third, after Chris Sheasby's late tackle on Brad Free. Saracens then worked frantically to keep Wasps in their own half and, after Shane Roiser failed to release, Lynagh kicked another penalty.

Tony Spreadbury ignored a fusillade of punches by Andy Reed on Tony Copsey and managed to find six minutes of injury-time, but Saracens withstood a late onslaught.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Coca-Cola goes flat for City

LEICESTER CITY, holders of the Coca-Cola Cup, crashed out 3-1 in the third round of the competition to Second Division Grimsby Town. Leicester went ahead after 17 minutes with a goal from Ian Marshall, but from then on Grimsby, quickening the tempo, ran amok. Kevin Jobling got the equaliser and Steve Livingstone, a second-half substitute, added two more, all three goals coming in a heady nine-minute spell.

First Division Ipswich Town disposed of Premiership champions Manchester United 2-0. Although United manager Alex Ferguson rested his picture-card players ahead of this month's two Champions League ties, the side still boasted seven star players. Ipswich were committed to the last, and in the mood for revenge, because the last time the two sides met, in the league, United thrashed them 9-1.

Arsenal dug deep into their reserves, leaving out £26 million worth of first-team players, but still pulled off the win their manager Arsene Wenger had predicted. Despite the controversy over Arsenal's decision not to field a full-strength team, they were too good for First Division Birmingham, though their 4-1 victory was sealed only by three goals in extra-time.

Chelsea needed extra time and penalties to see off Blackburn Rovers after the two sides ended level at 1-1 after 90 minutes. But the Blues ran out comfortable winners, 4-1 on spot-kicks.

Elsewhere, Newcastle beat Hull 2-0, Derby defeated Tottenham Hotspur 2-1, Leeds overcame Stoke 3-1, Coventry thrashed Everton 4-1, West Ham triumphed over Aston Villa 3-0, Barnsley were put out 2-1 by Southampton and Liverpool, now favourites to win the cup, saw off West Bromwich Albion 2-0.

In Scotland, the final of the Scottish Coca-Cola will be between Celtic, who defeated Dunfermline 1-0 and Dundee United, who beat Aberdeen 3-1 in the semi-finals.

THE Italian government agreed to look into the violence at this month's England-Italy match after an appeal from the British prime minister. The subject was raised by Tony Blair in a telephone conversation with the Italian prime minister, Romano Prodi. A Downing Street spokesman said: "They agreed that events surrounding the match should be investigated fully, and also that issues such as this should not create political or diplomatic problems."

FOOTBALL resigned itself to more litigation after an out-of-court settlement in favour of Ian Knight, a former Sheffield Wednesday player, whose leg was broken during an FA Cup tie. He accepted an undisclosed payment for the injury, understood to be far less than the $2.4 million he initially claimed. The case is just one of a series of such actions which threaten to fill a vacuum in insurance provision at a level to match the high salaries enjoyed by today's soccer stars.



Warne: staying at home

THE will-he, won't he? saga of Shane Warne playing in the English County Championship next season is finally over. The Australian spin sensation has turned down the chance to play in England, preferring to spend more time with his family. He was being chased by Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Sussex as their overseas player.

JOHN STEPHENSON has resigned as captain of Hampshire after two years in charge following a poor showing by the county. Last season Hampshire finished 14th in the cricket County Championship, were knocked out of the Benson & Hedges Cup in the zonal stage, and were defeated in the second round of the NatWest Trophy.

THE future of the British Athletic Federation has been thrown into doubt after track and field's governing body announced debts of more than £1 million. David Moorcroft, who recently took over as the BAF's chief executive, broke the news only two hours after insolvency practitioners were appointed as interim managers by a court. The crisis has been caused by reduced income from sponsorship and TV.

THREE tries in 12 minutes by the stand-in centre Darren Smith helped Brisbane Broncos defeat Hunter Mariners 36-12 in the final of Rugby League's inaugural World Club Championship in Auckland. Smith, playing in the absence of Anthony Mundine, touched down after 19, 24 and 30 minutes as the Broncos turned in a superb first-half performance which left the Hunter Mariners reeling.

AUSTRIA'S 38-year-old Formula One driver, Gerhard Berger, is to retire after the European Grand Prix at Jerez. Berger entered Formula One at the wheel of an ATS-BMW in 1984. The following year, he raced for Arrows before switching to Benetton in 1986, when he scored his first win, in the Mexican Grand Prix. He joined Ferrari in 1987, moved to McLaren three years later, returned to Ferrari for three seasons. He currently races for Benetton. So far, he has taken part in 210 grand prix races in his 14-year career.

ADIDAS has struck a new world record sponsorship deal with the All Blacks. The German sportswear makers will pay more than the $45 million reportedly offered by Nike to supply the Kiwis with their famous black strip. In return, New Zealand's new rugby academy will carry the company's name.

Football Premiership Everton 2 Liverpool 0

Kendall keeps the faith

Ian Ross

FOOTBALL being the uncaring, vindictive sport that it often is, there are few more rewarding sights than that of a vindicated man heady on the sweet drug of relief.

After almost wrestling with the less compliant members of his team in the dismal aftermath of Everton's match against Coventry City 10 days ago when they were thrashed 4-1, the manager of the Merseyside club, Howard Kendall, spent much of what he conceded was a "long and uncomfortable" night in protracted combat with his own conscience.

Confident man and a most accomplished manager he might be, but Kendall is not immune to human frailties. As he picked through the rotting remains of a despicable performance, he will have fallen prey to the greatest of managerial enemies, self-doubt.

"I knew we would play better against Liverpool; we had to because we really could not have played any worse than we did at Coventry," he said.

Kendall's demeanour after last Saturday's game was that of a humble man content with his day at the office, but his eyes were ablaze with passion. What he really wanted to do was climb to the highest rooftop and scream: "I told you so."

Improbably, Everton tore their neighbours to shreds and, but for the sense of calm that Steve McManaman instilled into Liverpool's always pedestrian football in the latter stages, the final margin would surely have been far greater.

It is plain that Liverpool have come to loathe these local affairs, and they were swept away like so many sandcastles before an onrushing tide. It was more surrender than defeat.

If appearing in these games is not much fun — and the players say that it is not — then watching them can also be murder.

Bone-jarring challenges and flying elbows are an inherent part of derby fixtures from Merseyside to Milan, and they are invariably deemed permissible simply because to outlaw them would defuse the element of tribal warfare that is crucial to the magnetism of such events.

Take the events of the 15th minute, if you will. Ugly pockets of friction had been developing since the afternoon's first kick, and a mist of anger was already hanging heavy in the air when Duncan Ferguson and Jason McAteer met down on the touchline.

The tackle — a genuine 50-50 affair, would you believe — was simply thunderous. Both men survived but less than a heartbeat later Paul Ince, the self-styled enforcer of Liverpool's "we are stars so don't touch us" policy, enticed Ferguson into an identical challenge. You could almost hear Ferguson's fillings rattling from the main stand.

Ferguson was in the mood to play and he subsequently became a persistent threat to the Liverpool defence. Rather strangely the quick but slight Bjorn Kvarme was detailed to shadow him rather than the slower but more muscular Neil Ruddock.

"Duncan was awesome today but you don't want a No 9 who only does it in the big games," Kendall said pointedly. Ferguson chipped in with much as Liverpool were outplayed, overrun and ultimately humiliated.

Indeed, the sight of Everton arrogantly playing keep-ball in the dying moments as those bedecked in red filed to the exits was the day's abiding memory.

Beyond that there were the magnificent contributions of the Everton captains past and present, Dave Watson and Gary Speed, and then there was Danny Cadamarteri — or Cadamagic as he seems to have become known.

Only 18 and attacking football's learning curve as an infant hamster does a wheel, Cadamarteri was terrific, sprinting clear of the fallen Kvarme with 15 minutes remaining to score a stunning goal and so confirm Everton's victory.

The Liverpool manager Roy Evans could have argued that Earl Barrett appeared to beat an Ince header off the line with his hand and that Ruddock was unfortunate to turn Andy Hinchcliffe's corner into his own net in first-half stoppage time. To his credit, Evans did not.

"We got precisely what we deserved: nothing at all," was his harsh yet realistic assessment of a defeat that has done precious little to help him keep his job after this season ends. "We simply forgot to play," he added ruefully.

Everton youngster Cadamarteri celebrates his goal with joyous team-mates PHOTOGRAPH: CLIVE BRUNSKILL

Athletics

Sutton retains marathon title

Duncan Mackay

MARIAN SUTTON retained her Chicago marathon title last Sunday and threw down the gauntlet again to Liz McColgan, Britain's No 1 distance runner.

A nosebleed in the closing stages left the 34-year-old Cornish woman looking as if she had run into the famous "wall" that marathon runners are supposed to hit around the 20-mile mark. In fact, she had scaled it spectacularly as she raced to victory in a personal best of 2hr 29min 3sec to win $50,000.

It was the first time Sutton had broken 2½ hours, the benchmark of world-class running, and it can only further motivate McColgan, who completed her preparation for next month's Tokyo Marathon by winning the Great Caledonian Run 10 kilometres in Edinburgh in a course record 32:43.

The two have enjoyed a great rivalry this autumn. Last month, Sutton beat McColgan in the Great North Run half-marathon, setting a personal best of 1:09:41. Then, in the Great South Run 10-mile race, Sutton pushed McColgan to a lifetime best of 52min.

In the men's race in Chicago, Khalid Khannouchi of Morocco saw off the challenge of defending champion Paul Evans to win in 2:07:10, which was a new course record.

Football Results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP:
Aston Villa 1, Wimbledon 2; Barnsley 2, Coventry 0; Blackburn Rovers 1, Southampton 0; Chelsea 1, Leicester 0; Crystal Palace 0, Arsenal 0; Derby County 2, Manchester Utd 2; Everton 2, Liverpool 0; Leeds Utd 4, Newcastle Utd 1; Tottenham Hotspur 3, Sheff Wed 2.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE:
Division One:
Bury 2, Birmingham 1; Crewe 1, Middlesbro 1; Man City 0, Reading 0; Norwich 1, Stockport 1; Nottm For 2, Tranmere 2; Oxford 1, Ipswich 0; Portsmouth 2, WBA 3; Port Vale 0, Bradford City 0; Sheff Utd 2, QPR 2; Sunderland 3, Huddersfield Town 1; Wolverhampton 3, Swindon Town 1.

Division Two:
Blackpool 2, Grimsby 2; Bournemouth 2, Fulham 1; Brentford 3, Walsall 0; Charlton 1, Stoke 1; Northampton 2, Gillingham 1; Oldham Athletic 2, Chesterfield 0; Plymouth 2, Southend 3; Watford 0, Millwall 1; Wigan 1, Luton 1; Wrexham 0, Burnley 0, Wycombe 1, Bristol Rovers 0.

Division Three:
Barnet 2, Hull 0; Brighton 1, Exeter 3; Cambridge Utd 1, Rochdale 1; Colchester 1, Shrewsbury 1; Darlington 5, Doncaster 1; Hartlepool 2, Leyton Orient 2; Macclesfld 1, Mansfield 0; Rotherham 1, Cardiff 1; Scarborough 1, Peterborough 3; Scunthorpe 0, Lincoln 1; Swansea 1, Notts County 2; Torquay 3, Chester 1.

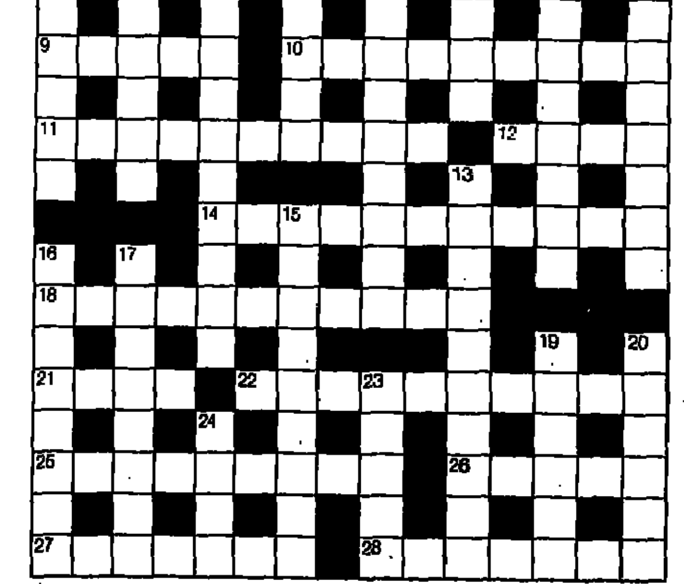
BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE:
Premier Division:
Aberdeen 2, Hibernian 0; Dundee U 4, Motherwell 0; Hearts 1, Celtic 2; Kilmarnock 0, St Johnstn 1; Rangers 7, Dunfirmline 0.

First Division:
Airdrie 0, Hamilton 0; Falkirk 1, Morton 0; Raith 2, Partick 0; Stirling A 1, Dundee 2; St Mirren 1, Ayr 1.

Second Division:
Brechin City 0, East Fife 0; Livingston 4, Forfar 3; Queen Sth 4, Clyde 3; Stranraer 4, Stenhsmr 1; Inverness CT 0, Clydebank 0.

Third Division:
Albion 5, East Stirling 1; Alloa 3, Queens Pk 4; Cowdenbeath 0, Arbroath 4; Dumbarton 2, Ross Co 2; Montrose 1, Berwick 2.

Cryptic crossword by Enigmatist



Across

1 Neurosis brought on by a mineral, unknown (double dose) (7)
5 See 10
9 Author of French parents (5)
10,5 23 24's livid hangers-on (3,6,2,5)
11 Confine old stone relic in pieces (10)
12 See 17
14 Properly man set out to get time on campsite? (6,5)
18 PC stockist (11)
21 Food cooked by 14 before drink with fellow (4)
22 Caesar's ten ways to make soap (10)
25 Negotiating aged family messenger, aged solvers duck (6-3)
26 French commune doesn't hold fort in American game (5)
27 Fence where one's sat eating food (7)
28 Two presents well out of contention (7)

Down

1 See 2
2,1 23 24's murine, masculine (2,4,3,3)
3 23 24's PM's 15? No, the reverse (4,2,4)
4 Author positively describing a shirt (5)
5 One fight nearly finished, another over, about food items (9)
6 Animal's sex option (4)
7 A European heading North guided in dismay (8)
8 Not be sure whether to rest in high temperature collecting energy (8)
13 23 24's Queen tracks bird about (7,3)
15 Team may be hotter, in this (3,6)
16 Time to ring agents over service (8)
17,12 23 24's a bit unwell first, then dead after time (8,4)
19 Two cards pruned rose (6)
20 Ascetic being caught out (6)
23 A German scientist lost some beer (5)
24 Summon one who pretended to have quelled his fighting (4)

Last week's solution

